
PICKLE JAR
FOUR
LITTLE
MISCHIEFS
BY
ROSA MULHOLLAND

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"Penny, Ma'am—Hungry, Ma'am," said Jock.

page 143.

FOUR LITTLE MISCHIEFS.

BY

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CONTENTS.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

FOUR LITTLE MISCHIEFS.

CHAPTER I.

MUMPS OR DUMPS?

OMETHING was the matter with Bunko!

The whole nursery was in a state of excitement about it, and nobody could tell what was wrong with the boy.

The nursery where the Hazel children live is one of the pleasantest in London. Little Bopeep is driving her sheep all up the walls. There are nice deep seats in the window where the children can make plays, and the dolls can sit and look out while the children are away having their walk. And there is a pretty fire-place with bright pictures, and a large press full of toys.

And yet in spite of all these nice things

around him, Bunko had turned suddenly cross.

He would persist in standing on his head in the corner all the afternoon, and when Nurse Green said he should *stay* in the corner for disobedient conduct, he wanted directly to come out.

Now Bunko was five years old on Christmas Eve last, and he ought to have known better than to behave like this. But he got worse and worse all the evening; pinched Rosie, who was a year younger than himself, spilled Nana's tea, and threw his shoes across the floor when he found he was to be put in bed half an hour earlier than the other children. Nana, who was the nurse-maid, did not know what to do with him.

"How is he getting on now?" asked Nurse when Nana came back to the nursery, looking quite hot, and as if she had been in a tussle.

"Something quite awful has got into him," said Nana, smoothing her apron and her ruffled hair. "I've left him with his face down on the middle of the bed, and his feet walking up the wall."

"Oh, dear!" cried the other children, "do let us go and look at him, Nursie."

"No, my dears, I can't allow it," said Nurse Green. "That would only make him worse and worse."

A few minutes afterwards she peeped into the bed-room herself, and there was Bunko fast asleep, his heels on the pillow, his fat little face down at the foot of the bed, and all the blankets on the floor.

"Poor lamb!" said Nurse, taking him up in her kind arms and putting him straight, as a little boy ought to lie, with his head on the pillow and his heels below; and then she covered him up lightly and walked on tip-toe out of the room.

"He is very hot," she said to Nana. "Only for waking him I should give him a pink powder."

"Oh, dear!" laughed Kitty to Jock, "I never knew people to get powders for naughtiness."

The next morning Bunko bit the soap when he was getting his bath, and then roared because he did not like the taste of it. At breakfast-time he looked very sulky, and sat with his head on one side, looking unusually fat and heavy. His eyes were like boiled gooseberries, and his cheeks were extremely red.

"Bunko's in the dumps," whispered Jock. "I'll go and stick a pin into him."

"You mustn't," said Kitty, who was eight, a year older than Jock. "Were you never in the dumps yourself?"

"I don't think it is dumps," said Nurse; "I believe it's mumps."

"Mumps! What are mumps?" cried Jock.

"Oh, lumps!" said Nurse,—"swelling that gets into your throat and makes you sick."

"Lumps and mumps and dumps!" cried Jock. "Oh, what fun!"

"I'm not sick," shouted Bunko in a voice that sounded as if he was swallowing a large potato.

"You don't eat your breakfast, my dear," said Nurse.

"Because everything tastes nasty," said Bunko.

"Show me your tongue," said Nurse.

"It's my own tongue, and I won't show it to anybody," said Bunko.

"Nana, you had better go down and knock at his mamma's door, and tell her that Bunko is not quite well."

"I *am* well!" roared Bunko; and then he slipped down off his chair, and lay in a round ball on the floor.

Mrs. Hazel was in the nursery in a few minutes, and gathered up fat Bunko in her arms. She was a very pretty lady, and the dearest, kindest mamma in the world.

"What is the matter with my darling boy?" she said tenderly.

"Everybody is cross," growled Bunko.

"No, no, my Bunko."

"And my throat is crooked, and my breakfast couldn't get down. And I am quite well, only Nurse wants me to be sick."

The other three children stood by and laughed. None of them had ever been ill, and they could not think what had happened to Bunko, who had always been a merry little fellow until now.

The door opened and in walked the doctor, who lived quite near, and had been sent for by Mrs. Hazel before she came up to the nursery.

Now whenever the children saw the doctor they ranged themselves all in a row and put out their tongues together. Dr. Goodhart was a great favourite with them all, and up to this time they had given him very little trouble.

"Bunko has got the mumps," said the doctor, "and he must have his jaws tied up

in hot poultices, and sit near the fire wrapped up in a blanket. He may eat oranges—"

"Oh! *mayn't* I have the mumps too?" cried Kitty

"And I?"

"And I?" cried the other children.

"Me mumpie too!" shouted Ba, the youngest of the family, who had been holding her mouth wider open than all the rest.

"Not one of you has got a mump but Bunko," said the doctor.

Jock drew in his tongue, shut his mouth, and felt his jaws all round, but could not find any mumps. He was thinking longingly of the oranges which mamma would presently send up to the nursery for Bunko.

"Keep him very warm, and I will send him some medicine," said Dr. Goodhart to Nurse Green, and then, having patted them all on the head, he left the nursery with Mrs. Hazel.

Bunko now felt himself the hero of the day, and sat wrapped up in his blanket before the nursery fire. All his naughtiness was over, for his head had begun to ache, and he was very glad to be quiet.

Kitty made a play for him and called him "King Mumpo," and all the children kept bringing him their broken toys for presents.

At last came Nurse with a large poultice, which she tied round Bunko's jaws, and the children watched it going on with wide open eyes.

"What is it like, Bunko?" they asked eagerly, as he sat up with it on, looking more and more a child that was being made very much of.

"Awfully jolly!" gobbled Bunko in a voice like a turkey-cock's. And he looked redder and fatter than ever.

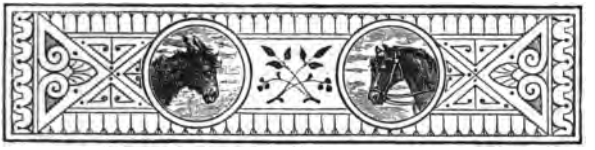
And then in came a basket of oranges and a new picture story-book, both of them presents from grandmamma.

"Oh, Bunko, *do* give me the mumps!" cried Kitty. "I *want* a new story-book, and I *am* so fond of oranges!"

But Bunko did not deign to answer her; only smiled on his elder sister with a sort of pitying and superior smile.

"Me mumpie too!" shrieked Ba again, snatching at the oranges. And then Nurse gave each of the children half one on condition that they would all go away and get ready for their walk, and leave Bunko

in peace with his mumps, to read his story-book and munch his oranges, as well as a little boy tied up in poultices could manage, with some trouble, to do.



CHAPTER II.

AN IMPUDENT MOUSE.

BEFORE I go any further I must tell you what the Hazel children are like, so that if you ever meet them you may know them at once.

Kitty, the eldest, eight years old, is small and slight for her age, as light and quick as a fairy, with dark-blue eyes and fair silky hair. She has a saucy tongue, and often gets into trouble on account of it, but she has a kind little heart, and is very fond of fun.

Jock is also straight and thin, as tall as Kitty, though a year younger, with short, straight, flaxen hair, light-blue eyes, and an exceedingly impudent nose. He is so swift and active in his movements that his papa sometimes calls him the young acrobat. He, too, is very good-natured if you can only get him to think; but he is more

obstinate than Kitty, and even more fond of having everything all his own way.

Bunko is a round, rosy little man, as I think I have told you before, with big, black eyes and a laughing face. Rosie is more like Bunko than the others; has a little plump pink face with great dark eyes, and a sweet, easy, generous disposition.

Ba is simply Ba. She has another name, of course, but mamma is keeping it for her till she is quite grown up; like the locket that her godmother gave her on her birthday. She is a dear little dumpling, with eyes like forget-me-nots, and though she can scarcely say a word that anyone can understand, she is the greatest chatterbox in the house, and is considered the wit of the nursery.

Well, I was going to tell you about how Jock got into a scrape, all through Bunko having taken the mumps.

Jock and Bunko had a room with two nice little cribs in it all to themselves; but when the mumps appeared Nurse Green took Bunko to herself, and Jock was left alone in his glory.

"It is a splendid thing to have a room all one's own!" thought Jock as he tucked himself up in bed and saw the moon wink-

ing at him from behind a chimney-pot outside above the roofs. But still he was not sorry when Nurse Green left the door open between his little room and her own.

"A fellow does not want to feel lonely," thought Jock, "though, of course, there is nothing to be afraid of. If anything really happened I should be more of a man than Nurse Green, ha, ha! I wonder why the moon can't keep steady in the sky on a fine night like this,—no storm at all to blow her about. Wo! Moon; steady, old girl! There, she's gone down the chimney."

And the next moment Jock was fast asleep.

What was it that wakened him? Something had done it, for there he sat bolt upright in his little bed staring around him. It could not have been Nurse Green's gentle snores from the next room, for Jock was accustomed to hear these friendly sounds through the wall at night, and he liked them, because they gave him a feeling that somebody else besides himself was alive in the house. Yes, there was certainly a sort of protection in Nurse's snoring, and Jock, even at seven years old, felt it; just as the little yellow chickens not long out of the shell like to hear the gentle clucking of

the hen who has let them wander from under her wings.

"There must have been some noise," thought Jock, "but it is gone now," and he dropped down on his pillow again and was almost asleep when once more something moved in the room, and there was Jock as before sitting on his bed, with his hair on end like a clothes-brush.

The moon was high now in the sky, but Jock was so excited that he did not even wonder how she had got up the chimney again. Her light made the room as bright as day, and Jock could see nothing more dreadful than his own knickerbockers hanging across the back of a chair in the most friendly manner imaginable.

But stay, what was that? A little black thing scuttled across the floor as fast as lightning and disappeared into a dark corner.

"I have it!" said Jock. "It is a mouse."

Jock was wide awake and had not the least desire to go to sleep again. Now that he found he had a live companion and playfellow in the room he had no notion of being so stupid as not to have a little fun.

He waited anxiously for some moments, and then he saw at last the little mouse

An Impudent Mouse.

page 20.

coming more slowly and cautiously than before across the carpet. It made a little short race and stopped, and then another little race and stopped again. I am sure you must have seen a little mouse doing just the same.

It was the smallest mouse and the fattest Jock had ever seen, and he took quite a fancy to it at once.

"What is the little chap up to?" thought Jock as it stopped at the foot of the chair on which Jock's clothes had been nicely laid by Nana when he went to bed. They were all folded and smooth except the knickerbockers that dangled across the back of the chair.

And what do you think the little mouse had come out of his hole to do? Jock told me exactly what he saw, and I am going to tell you.

He began to walk up the leg of the chair just as the bear in the Zoological Gardens will walk up his pole. Up he got on the seat of the chair and sat down to rest upon Jock's little snow-white shirt.

Jock was going to laugh out loud when he remembered how easily a mouse is frightened away by noise, and so he stuffed his pillow into his mouth just in time.

It was quite funny to see how long that mouse took to rest himself.

"Perhaps he lives down in the pantries," said Jock to himself, "and he has had to come up a kind of private staircase belonging to the mice. Let me see. It must go up through the walls and ceilings and be a good bit of climbing for a tiny fellow like that. No wonder he wants to rest on my shirt. It feels nice and soft after such squeezing and bruising as his poor little sides must have got."

Jock waited for him a very good time, and then he began to wonder how long it would really be before that lazy mouse would set out on his travels again.

"I do think he's gone to sleep there," said Jock to himself, "and I'm not going to stand that, I can tell him. I've no objection to his taking a rest, but I'm not going to have him making a bed of my shirt. But perhaps he is not there at all now. Perhaps he has got away!" and Jock put one long, thin, little leg out of his crib, intending to creep over to the chair and see.

Just at that very moment what do you think he saw?

One of the legs of Jock's knickerbockers

was dangling at the side of the chair-back, and hanging down low, and the other was lifted up higher in the air as if it was going to jump off, but couldn't, because the other leg would not let it. Both legs were puffed out open as if they fancied Jock's knees were still inside of them, and all this the mouse had perceived where it sat on the shirt.

Being quite rested at last it began to amuse itself, and what Jock saw when he had just put his leg out of bed was that impertinent mouse frisking round the open knee of the knickerbocker leg that was hanging lowest down from the back of the chair!

Jock drew his own leg into bed again, and, choking with laughter, sat there enjoying the fun.

When the mouse had done running round the knickerbocker knee it ran up the leg and disappeared, and presently it came out at the top and capered along the band, then ran right up the other leg and dropped down on the floor.

"Bravo!" cried Jock, "bravo!" and flung his pillow at the chair. And then he was very sorry for having so foolishly given way to his excitement, for when he looked

again the mouse was gone, and had been too much frightened to think of coming back again that night.

At the same time he heard Nurse Green stop snoring and get out of bed to cover up Bunko and give him a drink. She thought it was Bunko who had wakened her, and knew nothing about Jock and the mouse.

When she had settled to sleep again Jock got up very softly and picked up his pillow and crept into bed, where he lay laughing quietly about the mouse till he fell asleep.

"If it had been a large fat old mouse," thought he, "I shouldn't have wondered at its being so knowing, but a baby mouse like that! I hope it will come back to-morrow night. I will watch."

But now he was asleep again.

CHAPTER III.

JOCK GETS INTO A SCRAPE.

THE next night Jock watched for the mouse and it did not come, but the night after that it wakened him just as it had done the first time, and he enjoyed himself with its tricks as before.

He had left a few crumbs for it upon the floor, and it ate them up. Then another night Jock put a piece of cheese in his pocket which he had stolen out of the nursery cupboard, and he hoped that the mouse would creep into his pocket to get the cheese.

That night he slept so soundly, however, that he did not hear the mouse at all, and in the morning, lo and behold, the mouse had evidently been making a feast while Jock was asleep, for the cheese was gone and a hole was cut in the knickerbocker

pocket, showing how mousie had managed to get out.

And all that day Nurse kept wondering how Jock had managed to wear such a hole in his pocket.

"It looks exactly as if you had gnawed it, my dear," she said.

"And so it does," said Jock, but he said nothing at all about the mouse.

This sort of thing had been going on for a week, and at last one night Jock was wakened out of a dream in which he had fancied that a whole troop of horses were riding in a circus round the top of his head.

He bounced up and shook himself, but still the feet would keep pattering round and round on the top of his head. He put up his hand and dashed it across his hair, and down fell his friend, the mouse, and scampered away over the counterpane.

Now this was more than Jock could bear without making a noise. To have a mouse in his pocket hanging on a chair some yards away was fun, but to have a mouse playing at circus on his head was not so nice.

As he dashed the little mouse out of his hair he gave a piercing yell that awakened Nurse Green, and brought her pattering in

in a hurry to see what had happened to Jock.

"That nasty little mouse!" cried Jock shuddering, and the next moment he was very sorry he had said the words, for Nurse caught at them immediately, and the little boy feared that poor mousie's fate was sealed.

Nurse Green is one of those large, stout, comfortable people who are always terribly afraid of a mouse, and she now felt as much frightened as if she had heard that burglars had got into the house.

"Oh dear, dear!" she exclaimed, trembling all over, "to think of a mouse having found its way up to these rooms. We might as well be living in a pantry."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jock, and buried his head under the bed-clothes. It was great fun to him to see great big Nurse in such a state about a mouse.

"Now, sir, I'm sure you must have been putting cake in your pocket and scattering the crumbs about, or a mouse would never think of coming up here, no more than to the top of the Monument."

"What is the Monument?" cried Jock, popping up his head immediately.

"There!" said Nurse, with a shiver.

"I'm sure I'm not going to explain the Monument to you in my bare feet in the middle of the night. Go to sleep, Jock, directly, and to-morrow night see if I don't set a trap and catch that mouse!"

Jock did not like to hear about this at all, and next day he implored Nurse not to set the trap. He thought it very hard that the poor little mouse should be caught and killed all because he had taught it to come every night to his room by putting crumbs of cake on the floor.

Now, if Jock had said to Nurse, "It was my fault, because I put cheese in my pocket and crumbs on the floor, and if I leave off doing so, perhaps the mouse will not come again. Do wait a little before you set the trap;" if Jock had talked like that to Nurse, perhaps she would have waited as he wished.

But Jock's great fault was this, that he did not tell things which he ought to have told. You are not to suppose that he was untruthful. He would not have told a falsehood on any account. But he was often silent, when to be silent was almost as bad as telling a fib.

Nurse set the trap with a large piece of toasted cheese behind the bars, and placed it in the middle of the floor in Jock's room.

Jock cried that night after he was in bed, and hoped poor mousie would stay downstairs for once with his mother in the pantry. He intended to lie awake all night to warn his little friend of the danger, and drive him away when he came near the trap; but unfortunately he fell asleep. In the morning as soon as he awoke, there was the mouse squeaking in the trap, and Nana coming in at the door to dress Jock.

Jock was very miserable all the time he was getting dressed; the squeaks of that poor little mouse went to his heart.

At breakfast Nurse Green said to Nana, "As soon as you have finished your tea take the trap with the mouse in it out to the stable and tell the stable-boy to drown the mouse."

Jock's breakfast began to choke him, and his heart seemed to swell up till it got into his throat.

The other children cried, "Oh, poor mousie! Let us see it, Nurse," and "Oh! why must it be drowned?"

"Eat your breakfast, my dears," said Nurse. "You can't understand everything yet awhile."

Jock glanced over at Nurse, and it seemed to him at that moment that she looked just

like the wicked ogre in the fairy tale book, only dressed up in a cap and shawl. He felt that he must do something desperate.

"Nurse!" he said, "may I go into my room to get my pocket-handkerchief?"

"Certainly, my dear."

Off went Jock and closed the door of his room softly behind him. Then he flew at the trap, pulled up the little door, and mousie instantly flew out, scampered across the floor and disappeared down its tiny hole.

Jock went and put his eye to the hole; but he could not see the little mouse rushing down the mice's staircase through all the floors and along the many walls till it reached its home under the pantry boards. "I daresay its mother will give it a good scolding," thought Jock, "or its nurse. I wonder do mice have nurses by the bye! At all events, it won't be drowned. I will stuff up this hole to prevent it coming back to be killed!" said the little boy to himself, feeling that he would rather never see his tiny playfellow again than be the cause of his getting put to death.

"Jock! Jock! what are you doing, letting your breakfast get quite cold," cried Nana, opening the door.

"Oh! you *naughty* boy," she exclaimed

the next moment as her eye fell first on the empty trap and then on Jock's face. "You have let that wicked little mouse escape!"

"It is not wicked," said Jock, stoutly. "It is you who are wicked, all of you, wanting to kill a poor little creature that never did any of you any harm."

"Well, I *never!*" cried Nana, and immediately went off for Nurse.

Jock was found standing in the middle of the floor with his arms folded and a defiant look on his face.

"Jock, I did not expect this bad conduct from you," said Nurse. "You are a disobedient, deceitful boy—"

"Go away!" said Jock. "You are a pack of murderers!"

Nurse Green turned quite pale, and Nana screamed.

"Where can he have learned such language?" murmured Nurse.

"Murderers are people who shed innocent blood," said Jock. "But I've saved the mouse, so there! You can drown me if you like."

"I declare it sets my nerves all of a shiver," said Nurse. "Nana, go to the other children. Jock, you must come with me!" and she took him by the hand and led

him into an empty room, or rather a room containing nothing but trunks, which were stowed away there when not in use.

"Now, sir," said Nurse, "you must stay here all alone till you acknowledge your fault; and after dinner your mamma must hear of it."

"All right," said Jock, "I will tell mamma myself."

Nurse shut the door; and Jock was left with nothing but the empty trunks for company.

For some time he amused himself by opening and shutting the trunks, and examining them to find out the way they were made. For a while he thought he would like to be a trunk-maker, but after some time he got tired of that, and began to look about for some other entertainment. There was nothing else in the place to play with, and he went back to the trunks and pretended to be both a trunk-seller and a lady buying a trunk.

"I want a good large one, you know, because I have a great many things to carry. I must have room for my bonnets too, in the tray."

"Oh! madam, won't you have a separate one for bonnets? Here is a nice

handy thing! We make this kind for bonnets."

"But I don't want to have too many. I have five children, Mr. Trunks, and Nurse wants so much room to pack up their pinafores and things. The railways will hardly take us."

"Five children, madam? That is a great many. I hope they are all good?"

"They are very good children indeed; all but one called Jock. *He* has turned out quite wicked, and let a mouse escape out of a trap—"

"And, oh dear!" cried Jock, breaking down in his play and beginning to cry, "I wonder *will* mamma think me very wicked!"

He soon dried his tears, but he could not go back to that play any more; so after another despairing look round the room he walked to the window which was standing open.

"Hullo! cried Jock, "I see I can get out on the leads!"

He soon hopped out and began to walk along the leads, poking his little nose into all the nooks and corners. Of course he was in great danger, because he might have fallen over some of the parapets; but he was a cautious little chap with all his boldness,

and looked carefully before him wherever he went. He crept along by several windows, clambering over one or two stone divisions separating parts of the leads belonging to different houses. It was very exciting for a time, but by-and-by when he fancied he had seen all that was to be seen, he thought of getting back to his own window. At first he could not distinguish it from other windows, but presently he said, "Oh, there it is, standing open as I left it!" and he began to slide in over the sill and let himself down on the floor.

"Why, this not the trunk room at all!" he said. "I suppose it is one of the maids' bed-rooms. Never mind. That is all for the best, because now the door will be open!"

He tried the door and it was open; and out walked Jock from his prison, and away across the passage and in at the day-nursery door.

Nobody was there. The room was all nicely tidied up, the hearth swept, and the children's chairs against the wall. "They are all gone out to walk without me!" thought Jock. "Well, I must try and amuse myself until they come back."

He opened the toy-cupboard and looked in.

"I declare," he said, "here are some toys I never saw before," and he sat down on the floor and began to examine them.

Now perhaps you have guessed by this time that Jock had got into the wrong window and was now in a strange house, the house next door to his own mamma's and papa's house. While he was sitting quite contentedly looking at the toys the nursery door opened and in walked a strange nurse.

Jock looked up and saw she was a tall thin woman, not a bit like Nurse Green, who was fat and comfortable; and Jock had not the least idea who she was. But she was the nurse belonging to the strange house; the other children's nurse.

She gave a cry when she saw Jock. "Mercy me!" she exclaimed, "wherever did this strange little boy come from?"

"What strange little boy?" asked Jock.

"*You*," said the tall thin woman.

"I am not a strange boy," said Jock quietly. "It is you who are a strange woman."

"Well, I never!" said the woman. "As if I was not the nurse of this house!"

"My nurse is fat and round," said Jock, "and you are long and thin. And you are

a great deal uglier. I don't know what brought you here at all."

The tall thin nurse began to get into a passion.

"Jenny!" she called loudly; and in came a nice young nurse-maid; but it was not Nana.

"Jenny, will you please tell this bad boy who I am, this boy that seems to have got in here out of the streets to insult me."

"Why, of course you are Nurse," said Jenny. "Who are you, little boy?"

"I am Jock, and I am in my papa's house," said Jock, "and nothing you can say will make me believe that you two are Nurse Green and Nana."

"The child is mad," said the tall thin nurse, rolling up her eyes.

"Where are Bunko, and Rosie and Kitty?" asked Jock, trying very hard to keep from crying at the thought that these strange women had got into his mamma's house and driven all his own people out of it.

It seemed to him as if magic must have been at work since he was locked into the trunk-room half an hour ago.

"Where are they all gone to?" he shouted.

"Nobody's gone anywhere, only you have

no business to be here, whoever you are," said Jenny; and at the same moment a flock of little strange children came running into the nursery.

"Who is it? who is it?" they cried out, gathering round Jock and staring at him.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the thin nurse. "Some little rascal that has got down the chimney."

"You had better not say that again," said Jock, squaring up his fists. "I am not a rascal, and I never came down a chimney, and I want to know who you all are who are keeping me from seeing my own brothers and sisters, and my own nurses."

"Did you ever see such a bad boy?" cried the tall nurse.

"He is not a bad boy, I'm sure," said the eldest of the children, a nice little girl called Dora. "Don't scold him, Nurse. I say, little boy, what is your name?"

"My name is Jock."

"And where do you live?"

"I live in this house."

"Now, is he not a naughty boy?" cried Jenny.

"I will carry him down to mistress at once," said the cross thin nurse, and she flew at Jock.

"Oh! no, Nurse, don't touch him. He will come down with me to mamma," said Dora taking his hand kindly.

"I will go anywhere you like with you," said Jock to Dora, "because you have a nice voice and a nice face, and you do not call me names."

"But I do wonder where you came from," said Dora.

"I came from nowhere. This is my house; and it is all of you who have come from somewhere," persisted Jock. "However, I'm glad *you've* come, because you are nice."

"Come down to mamma," said Dora softly, for she saw the long thin nurse just getting ready to fly at Jock again. And Jock and she walked out of the nursery hand in hand.

"I can't make it out," said Jock as they went down stairs. "It's just as queer as Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp."

"Do you know that story?" said Dora.

"Of course I do," said Jock, and then the children arrived at the drawing-room door.

The nurse had come down straight after them, and walked into the drawing-room first.

"Here's a pretty thing, ma'am," she said. "A strange little boy prowling about the nursery while we were all out for our walk. Sitting thieving at the toy-cupboard, and giving impudence when he was caught."

"Mamma, mamma, he is not a thief!" cried Dora, seeing the frown coming on Jock's face again. "He is a nice little boy and has read Aladdin!"

"I can't understand all this," said Dora's mother.

"We found him in the nursery!" burst forth Nurse.

"Let the child tell his story himself," said Dora's mamma. "Come here to me, my dear," she said kindly, "and tell me all about it."

"You are not my mamma!" said Jock. "Oh, how I wish I had my own mamma!" and poor Jock broke down at last, and cried and sobbed as if his heart would break.

"You can go upstairs, Nurse, and leave him to me. Dora, you can stay. It is all a mistake somehow, and we will try to clear up the mystery."

The long thin nurse went away grumbling, and Jock was left alone with Dora and her mamma.

"Now, my dear," said the lady, putting

her soft hand on his head, "think a little while and tell me where you were an hour ago."

"I think I was in the trunk-room, then," said Jock. "Nurse Green locked me up for letting my dear little mouse get out of the trap. And I played at a trunk-seller and a lady buying trunks; and then I got tired, and I saw the window open, and then I got out."

"Out where, my boy?"

"Out on the leads."

"At the back of the house?"

"Oh, yes. The trunk-room is at the back. And I walked about; and one time I nearly fell over."

"Good heavens!" murmured the lady.

"And then I got tired of that too, and I wanted to come in. And I got into the house again through the open window; only it wasn't the trunk-room, and I thought it was one of the maids' bed-rooms."

"And then you went into the nursery?"

"Yes; and I saw they were all out, and I sat down at the toy-press to wait for them; and then a long, thin, cross woman came rushing at me, and a lot of strange people came in. And they have all been

strange ever since," cried Jock, with a fresh burst of sobbing, "and I'm afraid they will never come back!"

"You poor little stray child!" said Dora's mother, taking him up in her arms. "Don't you see how it has all happened? You got in at the wrong window, and came into our house instead of your own!"

Jock stared, and then burst out laughing.

"Oh, what a duffer I am!" he said. "Of course that's what I did."

Dora had been crying too, but now she dried her eyes and began to laugh with Jock.

"Why, mamma, then he is the little boy next door!" said Dora.

"Yes, my dear, and I fear his poor mother will be in a sad state of anxiety about him," said Dora's mamma. "Ring for my bonnet, Dora, and you and I will take him home ourselves at once."

Jock's mamma was at this moment shut up in her own room in dreadful trouble because her boy could not be found. She had only just been told by Nurse Green that he was missing, and that the whole house had been searched for him in vain.

The awful part of it was this, that they were all afraid Jock must have lost his

footing on the leads and fallen down from the top of the house.

Imagine how delighted poor Mrs. Hazel was when she heard Jock's voice at her door, and the next moment held him in her arms.

"Oh mamma, darling! I am so glad to get you again!" he cried, "I have been in the next house, and I was so frightened, and oh, it was such a funny mistake all the time."

"Oh, my Jock, you have nearly killed your mother. I thought my boy was lost or dead."

"I was only in the next house, mother, after all; but it was dreadful!"

"How did you get into the next house, my child?"

"In at their window, mother, off the leads. I thought I was coming back in here. But oh, mamma, there is such a kind little Dora down-stairs, and her mamma is with her. Her mamma is nearly half as nice as you. And they brought me back. And they are afraid you are frightened."

"Let us go down to them quickly, my dear, and thank them for their kindness."

Jock and his mother went down to the drawing-room at once, and there Jock's

mamma and Dora's mamma took each other's hands and cried for a few moments together, because they both felt how dreadful it would have been if Jock had been picked up dead out of the gutter instead of being brought in safe and well out of a friendly neighbour's house.

And I may as well tell you here that this was the very beginning of a life-long friendship between these two mothers, who never had known each other before.

After Jock had been gently scolded by his mamma for his disobedience to Nurse, and his thoughtlessness in going out on the leads, he was forgiven; and his mamma said there might be a cake in the nursery for tea that evening, as rejoicing for Jock's safe return.

It was a very good cake, I can tell you, with raisins in it, and everything nice.

Nurse Green did not say anything more about the mouse. A tear was in her eye as she cut a great slice of cake for Jock, and thanked God in her heart that he was there alive before her. For Nurse Green loved Jock very much, though sometimes she would be angry when he was naughty.

As for Jock himself, when he looked at his own nurse's kind, fat, comfortable face,

and heard her pleasant voice again, he remembered the long, thin, cross woman who had bullied him next door. And he said to himself that he would forgive Nurse Green for wanting to drown poor mousie, and that he would try not to be naughty any more.

CHAPTER IV.

KITTY'S FAULT.

THE next day Jock got the mumps, and the day after that Rosie got them, and even little Ba had her share of the mumps too. Everybody had them but Kitty, who never had been sick in her life, and she was very curious to know what it was like to feel ill.

She thought it must be very nice to be rolled up like something very precious, and fussed over and petted, and have grapes and oranges placed at her hand, and nice toys and story-books sent her by her friends.

For all the children had a quantity of nice things sent them by their friends as soon as people knew they had got the mumps. Even little Dora next door sent a pretty paint-box to Jock, and Jock sat up in his

bed half the day painting pictures of people he liked and people he did not like.

Bunko was quite better now, and he used to come and order the pictures; and when they were quite finished he made a little Royal Academy at the end of the room, where he hung up Jock's pictures for all the world to see.

Then he would pretend that a great crowd came in to look at the pictures, and all the people said that Jock's pictures were the finest in the show. Bunko would change his voice every minute, pretending to be all the people talking.

"Do you see that wonderful likeness over there?" he would say, "that is the long, thin, cross nurse that lives in Dora's nursery. Dear me! do you not recognize her?"

"Of course I do, I should know her anywhere. She has the most remarkably unkind face I ever saw."

"Yes, indeed, I never saw such a cross end of a nose."

"That picture is not to be sold, Bunko!" cried Jock out of his poultices. "Nurse Green has bought it to hang by the side of her bed."

And then Nurse Green, who had just come into the room, went off into a fit of

laughing, paid a hundred pounds for the picture on the spot, and carried it off and hung it up on the wall above her pillow.

While all this fun was going on poor Kitty felt very lonely. Jock and Bunko were kept in a room by themselves, and that is how they came to have this play together with nobody else to join in it. Rosie and Ba were in another room with Nana taking care of them, while Nurse Green went in and out of both little hospitals, seeing that everything went right. Rosie and Ba had funny little plays of their own. Rosie's doll was a crossing-sweeper, and swept a crossing all across the quilt; and Ba's doll was a lady giving her a penny. The lady had to climb over the rails of the two cribs to get to the crossing-sweeper; but that did not matter in the least. When the two little girls were tired with their play they lay down and chattered to each other through the crib-rails. And they had a very good time of it as you may think.

Now Kitty, as I told you, was very lonely while all the other children were so happy with their mumps and plays. She had a governess who came in the mornings, but lessons only lasted about two hours,

and then tnere was all the rest of the day to be got through. Kitty was very fond of story-books and read a great deal, but still she missed her little playfellows, and the plays they used to make all together in the nursery. Her mamma used sometimes to take her out for a walk, and then Kitty was as happy as a queen.

One day her mamma took her into the Crystal Palace Bazaar, which is a very nice place for children, as I daresay you know. Kitty walked all round the gay stalls on her tip-toes, holding by her mamma's hand. Some one was playing pretty music somewhere, and Kitty danced along feeling as merry as a little bird. Her mamma stopped at each of the stalls and allowed her to look at everything upon them, only warning her gently not to touch anything lest she should do mischief. Kitty declared she would not touch, and she meant to keep her word.

"Now, Kitty," said Mrs. Hazel, "what would you like to have? I am going to buy you something nice."

"Oh, mamma, let it be a transparent slate! I do so want a transparent slate."

"Are you so fond of drawing, Kitty?"

"Oh, I think I am. I want to try. I

can paint very well, you know, and now I should like to learn to draw."

"You can paint, can you?"

"Oh, yes; I have painted all the pictures in my story-books. But I want to make some pictures of my own."

"Well, my dear, you shall have the slate."

"Thank you, thank you, mamma. Then I shall have so many nice things that I like. You know the things I like best in all the world are these: story-books first, flowers next, and paint-boxes afterwards."

"And then come transparent slates?"

"Yes, I think so. I am going to try."

"And do I come in nowhere, Kitty!" said her mother smiling.

"Oh, mamma, you are a person, and of course you are the first of all the *persons* that I love. I was only talking of my *things*."

"I see. Well, let us get the transparent slate."

The slate was bought, and done up in paper, and Kitty was allowed to carry it home herself. Then her mother bought her some sweetmeats, and Kitty was in great delight.

I wish I could end this chapter here, but

I am obliged to tell you that after all her pleasure that day poor Kitty got into trouble.

While her mother was waiting for change of some money at one of the stalls Kitty flew round to another stall where there were some pretty toys, and began to look at them very closely. And I am sorry to say she quite forgot her mother's desire, and her own promise that she should not touch the toys. And she took one of them up in her hands.

It was a mechanical toy dog, one which you could wind up with a key so that it could jump about by itself. Kitty had seen such a dog before, and knew how it was worked. She took up the key which was hanging round doggie's neck, and began to wind it up as fast as she could.

Now I don't want you to think that Kitty was a wicked little girl in doing this. She really forgot for the moment that she had promised not to touch. It was a great pity she had not tried harder to remember; but children will forget sometimes, won't they?

She wound up the dog in a great hurry, and then she heard a click inside, as if the spring had broken. She put the doggie

down on the floor, and he only sat looking at her and did not move.

A great fear struck upon Kitty's heart that she had broken the toy; and just at that moment she heard her mother calling her. She left the dog upon the floor and flew after her mamma. Her mother took her hand as before and walked quickly with her out into the street.

Poor Kitty, her joy was all gone! She walked along the streets with a pain going through and through her. "I have disobeyed mamma," she was thinking, "and I have broken the stall-woman's toy. I know she will never be able to sell that dog to anyone. And mamma thinks I am good all the time."

"Why is my little girl so silent now?" asked her mother presently.

"I am very tired, mamma," said Kitty faintly.

"Well, dear, we shall soon be at home," said her mamma pleasantly.

"Oh, she does not know how naughty I have been," thought Kitty; "and I cannot bear to tell her."

When Kitty was at home, and had got her hat and coat taken off, and her slippers and pinafore put on, she sat down at the

nursery table to draw on her slate. She drew a great many pretty things, and for a long time she did not think about the broken dog at all. At last, however, she got tired drawing, and then she sat still, staring before her, and she seemed to see that dog that would not jump standing just where she left him by the stall in the Crystal Palace Bazaar.

"Nobody will buy him," thought Kitty, "and the lady at the stall will lose her money. Mamma told me that was how it would be if I touched and broke anything."

You see Kitty was a wide-awake little girl, and she knew right from wrong exceedingly well. She felt like a little thief sitting there with her pencil in her hand.

"Oh, if I could only tell mamma," thought Kitty, "but I know the words will stick in my throat. Mamma will say I ought to have told her at once. I know I ought, but somehow there didn't seem to be time. And she thought I was so good, and now she will think me bad. And I did not want to be bad; oh, dear! oh, dear!"

Now Kitty had always been praised for telling the truth; too much praised, perhaps, for she had rather prided herself on never being tempted to conceal anything.

When Jock had sometimes got into trouble for a want of frankness, Kitty had always been pointed to as an example of a candid child.

And now she had got into a net of concealment herself. How easily it had happened, and how little she had meant it! She never could bear to hear herself praised again.

"Well, well!" sighed Kitty at last, "I really cannot help it now. I did not intend to break the toy, and I will try to forget about it."

That night she did not feel well, and the next morning she was very ill with the mumps.

She was a great deal more ill than any of the other children. Her head ached and she was sick all over. Lying flat in her bed she wondered how she could ever have longed to have the mumps. She had got them now in earnest.

Nice things were placed beside her, and she could not eat them. Even fruit she could hardly taste. She wondered how the other children could keep laughing in the other rooms. The mumps were no fun at all to her.

And all the time she thought that little

dog that would not go kept sitting beside her bed and looking at her.

After a while she was so very sick that her mamma stayed beside her constantly, and would not leave her either night or day.

One night she sat up in her bed suddenly and cried out, "Oh, mamma, do send that little dog away!"

"What little dog, my darling?" said her mother, frightened at poor Kitty's cry.

"The dog I broke at the Crystal Palace, mamma. Oh, I am so glad I have told you! He always sits looking at me and he will not jump about."

"The dog you broke, my Kitty? You did not tell me at the time?"

"No, mamma, darling; and how I *wish* I had! But, oh, now I have told you, do you think he will go away?"

"My precious child," said Mrs. Hazel, "you must get well first, and then we will talk about it."

"Oh, no, mamma, let us talk about it now. The woman has lost her money, for nobody will buy a dog that cannot go."

Then Mrs. Hazel listened while poor little sick Kitty confessed her fault.

And as soon as the little girl was well

enough they went together to the stall where the dog had been, at the Crystal Palace Bazaar.

A nice quiet-looking person in a black dress was standing at the stall, and Mrs. Hazel spoke to her.

"My little girl says she broke a toy dog of yours about a fortnight ago. I am sorry to say she was afraid to tell of it at the time. But now she has brought her own money to buy the broken toy."

And it was true that Kitty had brought all her savings for several months to buy this dog, which she believed no one else would have.

"I don't think it could have been my dog, madam," said the person at the stall; "for I have only had one, and I have it still. And he jumps about beautifully."

"Oh, yes, it was here!" cried Kitty; "here on this very spot," she said, going round to the back of the stall. "And—why, this is the dog. I know him by the blue ribbon round his neck."

"Then, miss, you did not break him."

"I wound him up very fast," said Kitty, "and then something clicked inside of him, and then he would not go."

"Sometimes they do that," said the stall

person, smiling; "and they come all right when you give them a little touch. Look here, missy; see how nicely he can jump!"

And, surely enough, there he did jump, hopping so funnily all across the boards that no one who looked at him could keep from laughing.

"Oh, mamma, I am so glad he is not broken! I suppose I may buy him all the same?"

"Certainly, my love. He will make a great deal of fun in the nursery."

Kitty paid her money and took the doggie in her arms. And as they went home her mamma talked to her nicely about her fault.

"You see, my child," she said, "how much pain of mind you might have been saved if you had only come to me on the instant and said, 'Mother, I have broken that toy!' We should then have gone straight back and examined the dog, and you would have discovered that no mischief had been done."

"I will never have a secret again," said Kitty. "They are very, very dreadful things, and make one feel so lonely. I will tell it out straight in a moment before I have time to get afraid."

And certainly that jumping dog did make great fun in the nursery. How it hopped, and how it sat up on its tail, and how it stared at every one straight with its round bright eyes, can never be quite believed except by children who have had such a doggie to jump for themselves.

CHAPTER V.

DORA COMES TO TEA.

WHEN the children were all quite better and the mumps had gone away, Jock and Kitty agreed that it would be very nice if they could have Dora to tea in their nursery; and they asked their mamma if she would give them leave to invite her.

Mrs. Hazel was pleased at the idea, and as Jock was Dora's particular friend he was allowed to write the invitation. This is the letter that Jock composed on his slate:—

"My Dere dora,

"Will you ask yure Mother to allow you to come in to our Nursry for Tee tomorro at 5.

"Yure loving frend,

"JOCK."

Nurse Green looked over his shoulder and said there were some mistakes which he had better correct before copying his note upon paper. Jock was greatly surprised, and could not believe there was an i in "friend" until he looked in the dictionary. And he thought Dora looked much prettier with a little d. "For she is only quite a little girl, you know, Nurse."

"So she is, my dear; but I daresay she knows how to write a letter."

Jock submitted to have his words corrected. And the note was taken into the house next door

The answer arrived very soon—a nice little note, very correctly spelled, only written in such large letters that it looked as if Dora was speaking to Jock in an exceedingly loud voice. This is how it ran:

"MY DEAR JOCK,

"MY MOTHER IS VERY PLEASED TO LET ME COME TO YOU.

"YOUR AFFECTIONATE LITTLE DORA."

At the proper time Dora arrived in a nice little light blue frock and a white muslin pinafore. The Hazel children all ga-

thered round her, and Jock introduced her to his sisters and brother.

"This is Dora!" he said. "Isn't she nice?" And then they all felt quite comfortable together.

Nurse Green had spread the large round table with quite a feast for tea. There was a great cake full of raisins and citron, and with almonds and sugar on the top. Then there was a huge dish of crackers and another of fruit. After tea the children played at games, and Nurse taught them a charade.

A word was chosen, and Bunko got up on the rocking horse, and pretended to ride furiously along a race-course.

"What a beautiful bay horse!" cried Kitty, who was a lady passing by, to Dora, who was another lady.

"Oh, what a splendid bay!" said Jock, who was a groom taking the horse's head when the race was over.

"A wonderful bay!" said Nana.

"The finest bay I ever saw!" cried Nurse.

And then that part of the charade was over.

In the second part Jock kept a shop and all the rest of the children were his customers.

"I must buy a pretty purse," said Dora, tripping into the shop.

"And I must buy a pair of stockings," said Kitty, following her.

"And I want a gun," said Bunko.

"You must say 'buy,' Bunko, or it won't do," said Nurse.

"I want to buy a gun," said Bunko.

"And I will buy a doll's house," said Rosie.

And then the second part of the charade was over.

In the third part the whole word was to be guessed. Kitty was dressed up in Nurse Green's bonnet and mantle, and held in her arms the largest doll the toy-press could produce. The doll was wrapped up in a long white cloak, and Kitty, as she walked about, kept hushing it to sleep.

"Go to sleep, baby, dear little baby. Go to sleep baby, baby dear!"

"What a sweet baby!" said Dora.

"A dear baby!" said Rosie.

"A cross baby!" cried Jock.

"An ugly little baby!" said Bunko.

Then Nurse Green set all the children to guess the word of the charade. And the word was "*baby*," as I am sure you already know. The first part was *bay*, and

the second was *buy*, and the third was *baby*.

Jock took up his slate and wrote the word "Baybuy."

"Oh, Nurse!" he said, "I thought you could spell better than that. Now, suppose I had put bay-buy in my letter to Dora?"

"We don't mind spelling in charades, my dear. If the sound is right it will do."

"That's just what I think about every kind of words," said Jock. "I like to write them down the way they sound."

After that the children played at hiding the handkerchief. Bunko hid it in a drawer, and Rosie behind a curtain, and Kitty put it in a vase on the chimney piece, and Dora got it squeezed in at the back of the clock. But the cleverest thing of all was done by Jock, who slipped the handkerchief in under the carpet, spreading it out flat so that it made no lump. Nobody could find it that time, and Jock had to hide it again.

Ba insisted on being allowed to hide the handkerchief. She called it a "pam-haff," for Ba's little talk was the funniest thing you ever heard.

When she got the handkerchief to hide she trotted about waving it in her hand, and in the end she had to hide it in Nurse's pocket, for she could not think of any other hiding-place.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HEDGE DOLLS.

I THINK I told you that the mumps had quite disappeared out of the nursery; but still Mrs. Hazel was not satisfied with the health of her children. She thought their cheeks were not so rosy as they had been a month ago, and make up her mind that they all needed change of air.

"If I could hear of some nice farmhouse in the country," she said to Nurse, "where you and they could be taken in and fed on fresh butter and cream, I should send you all away for a month. I could not leave town at present myself. But I know I can trust them with you."

Nurse agreed with her mistress that the children needed change; and Mrs. Hazel spoke to Dr. Goodhart about the matter. The end of it all was that a nice farmhouse

was discovered in a pretty part of the country where Nurse and her flock could be received. And off they all went one sunshiny morning.

The farmhouse was a great rambling building with several large pretty gables, and some queer windows that looked like windows in an old picture. Farmer Dale told the children that a great gentleman had once lived in the house. But he was dead long ago, and his family gone away elsewhere.

There were a great many noble trees standing about the house, and oh, how the birds did sing in their branches, right in through the windows of the children's nursery!

The nursery was a wide, fine room, very bare and very clean, with nicely sanded boards and no carpet, except a little bit to put under Nurse's feet. A great jar full of wild flowers and grasses stood in the fireplace, and an enormous brown press went all across one wall. The room had a delicious smell of dried apples, and Mrs. Dale said to Nurse that it was because she generally saved the winter apples in this room when there was nobody at home to occupy it.

There was a very large garden at one side of the house, in which grew quantities of both flowers and fruit. Apple-trees covered with green apples stood among the flower-beds and the beds of vegetables; and the walls were all covered with peach and plum trees. Gooseberry bushes were ranged all along the paths, with great white and orange lilies, and rose-bushes in between them. The gooseberries were quite green and hard still, and so were the raspberries, strawberries, and currants, which had vast beds all to themselves in different parts of the garden. The children looked at them with longing eyes, and wished they were ripe; but Farmer Dale forbade them to touch one before he should give them permission.

"They would make you ill as sure as you live," he said, "and mind you keep your fingers off them. When they are quite ripe you shall have a real feast of fruit."

Poppie and Bet, the farmer's two little girls, took the London children to see their own little gardens which their father had given them in a corner, and where they worked in the afternoon when they had come home from school. Poppie had some

marigolds, sweet-william, and gilliflowers in her little bed; and Bet had a rose-bush, some double-daisies, and some forget-me-nots.

Poppie and Bet were two nice little curly-headed girls in check pinafores and strong shoes. It was great fun for Kitty and Rosie to hear all about the plays and doings of the country children.

There was a field outside the garden, which was all surrounded by a close-cut hedge, and in this hedge Poppie and Bet had several dolls'-houses. It sounds funny, does it not, when you hear of dolls living in a hedge? But it is quite true that Bet and Poppie had dozens and dozens of dolls, and that they all lived in a hedge!

I am sure you have seen little hollow places in a hedge that look as if something ought to live in them. Some of them are quite large holes, but when the fresh green leaves grow out around them and line them all through, then they get smaller, and become pretty little parlours and drawing-rooms.

You are not to suppose that the dolls that lived in these holes were wax ones like Kitty's and Rosie's.

"Have you got any dolls?" said Kitty

to Poppie the first evening they all went to play in the garden.

"Yes," said Poppie, "but not so many as I had last summer. I have only a hundred."

"A hundred!" cried Kitty, clasping her hands. "Oh dear, do you call that not many? I never had so many in my life."

"How many have you got then?"

"I have six, because I take care of them. Rosie has only two, because she always does something to hers. She kisses the paint off them, and leaves them on the fender, warming themselves till they melt, or she pulls them about so that all the sawdust runs out at their elbows and knees!"

"Bet and I have got a hundred each," said Poppie.

"Oh, do show them to me!" cried Kitty. "What a great large press you must have to keep them in!"

"They never come into the house," said Poppie, "they live in the open air."

"Oh goodness!" said Kitty, "doesn't the rain destroy them?"

"They live in the hedge," said Poppie, "and the rain doesn't get at them. But even when it does they do not hurt."

"Do come and show them to me!" cried

Kitty. "Oh, here comes Rosie. Oh, Rosie, Poppie has got a hundred dolls!"

"How much is a hundred dolls?" asked Rosie, opening her round blue eyes very wide.

"Oh, I don't know, but it is a great, great many!" cried Kitty. "She is going to show them to us living in a hedge."

Away they all flew together, out at the garden door, and across the neighbouring field.

"Here they are!" said Poppie, rushing breathlessly up to the hedge. "This is the best drawing-room, where all the ladies are sitting. Here are Dolly, and Annie, and Catherine, and Elizabeth, and Isabella, and Louisa, and Jane!"

Kitty stretched her little thin legs and looked in at the drawing-room full of ladies. Rosie was so fat and short that she had to get on a stone to see properly.

"But are those dolls?" asked Kitty in a disappointed voice.

"Of course they are dolls," said Poppy; "what else could they be?"

"I think they are only little bits of stick with rags tied round them," said Kitty.

"Oh, that does not matter at all," said Poppie. "They are so pretty when you

know them. And they have all got names, and they know how to do all sorts of things."

"*Do* they?" said Kitty, "what do they do?"

"Oh, they sew, and read, and scold the servants, and teach their children, and play the piano, and ever so much more."

"Why are they not doing it now?" asked Rosie.

"Oh, because they are resting themselves now. They do all those things when I am away. They always rest themselves when I am here."

"But you never see them?"

"That does not matter in the least," said Poppie; "now I will show you another set who are in the kitchen, doing their work."

She showed them a hole lower down in the hedge where seven or eight other rag and stick dolls were standing or sitting about in much the same way as the others.

"These look just the same as the ladies," said Kitty.

"Oh, no; they have only cotton clothes on," said Poppie, "and the others are dressed in silk and satin."

"Not much dressed," said Kitty, "only little rags tied round them."

"That's the good of it!" cried Poppie; "any little scrap does for a doll's dress, and you can have as many as you please. However, if you do not like my dolls you need not look at them."

"Oh, but I do like them!" said Kitty; "only they look so funny after our dolls, which are all of wax or china."

"I am sure yours are beautiful," said Poppie, "and I would like to see them, but the good of ours is that we have such a lot. Here is the dairy down here, and Martha is churning."

"Which is Martha?"

"The long stick with the blue cotton rag. We call her a tall person in a pretty blue dress. She has yellow hair and rosy cheeks."

"I can't see her cheeks," said Rosie.

"That does not make the slightest difference," said Poppie; "when you pretend everything you can have anything you like."

"Can you?" said Kitty.

"Of course you can," said Poppie. "Theresa here has jet black ringlets, and she wears a scarlet gown."

"I see," said Kitty, looking at the scrap of red ribbon tied round the stick called Theresa.

"Then we have a houseful of children here," said Poppie, moving on along the hedge. "They are sometimes very naughty, and sometimes they play funny tricks. We have a boy called Tom, who gives us a great deal of trouble."

"Which is Tom?" said Kitty.

"Here, in the brown jacket. He is standing in the corner now for being naughty. And they all go to school. Here is the school where we send them every day. You see it is quite full of scholars."

"It certainly is great fun," said Kitty; "I should like to have a hundred dolls of my own."

"Ask your nurse if she has any rags and scraps in her trunks," said Poppie. "It all depends on how many of them you can get. You can find any amount of nice little twigs about here."

"So we can," said Kitty; "and can you find us some parlours and drawing-rooms?"

"Oh, as many as you like!" said Poppie. "And now will you show me your dolls?"

"That I will," said Kitty; and they all fled off across the field again, and dashed into the house and up the great brown staircase into the nursery."

"Softly! softly!" said Nurse. "Farmer

Dale will think there is a storm rising," as Kitty rushed at the tall old chest of drawers in the corner of the room. A drawer was dragged out, and there lay Kitty's six dolls —a grand madam dressed for a ball, a little French lady, with costume and boots and gloves complete, a little girl-doll in a frock and pinafore, a servant-doll with a duster and broom in her hand, and two baby-dolls in long white robes. Poppie had never seen such beauties in her life.

"Oh!" she cried, "how could you look at my bits of sticks after these? But oh dear! oh dear! I should be afraid to touch them."

"You needn't be afraid, Poppie; they won't drop to pieces. Take them in your arms and nurse them," said Kitty encouragingly.

Poppie held them one after another in her embrace, examined their clothes, put them to sleep, took them out to walk, and did everything else that could be done with dolls so fine as these. At last they were returned to their drawer, and Kitty began to tell Nurse about the rag and stick people who lived in the hedge.

"They are far more fun, you know, than wax and china dolls," she said. "And oh!

it is so delightful to think you can have a hundred of them. Think of whole *families* of dolls, Nursie darling!"

"I should like to see one," said Nurse.

"Oh! they look very badly when you carry them about by themselves," said Poppie; "all bare and ragged; and you notice then that they have no faces or hands. But when you see them all together in their pretty green drawing-rooms in the hedge, you can't think how nice they look, —just as good as real people."

"Then I must go out after dinner and have a peep at them," said Nurse Green.

"And oh, Nurse dear!" said Kitty, "won't you look in your boxes and see if you haven't some scraps of ribbons and silks? Even bits of cotton will be of use The more rags I can get the more dolls I can have. And I want to have a hundred dolls at once!"

Nurse very good-naturedly left her sewing and went to rummage among her things for rags. Kitty stood holding her pinafore like a wide open bag to hold the scraps which might be found. Nurse found a nice parcel of bits of various materials which a friend of hers, a dressmaker, had given her to make patchwork. You will understand

what a kind, good nurse Mrs. Green really was when I tell you that she robbed her patchwork of these brilliant scraps in order to give the children pleasure.

All that sunny afternoon Kitty and Poppie and Rosie and Bet spent sitting on a green slope beside the hedge, making dolls to put in Kitty's new dolls' apartments, which were some of the holes among the leaves. The hot sunshine had moved to the other side of the field, and the children were able to take off their sun-bonnets and sit in the cool shade. They clipped the nice bright bits of silk and satin and stuff into stripes to tie round the twig dolls, and then they plucked the smoothest rods they could find, and broke them up into little bits of three or four inches long. Every little piece of twig got a nice morsel of stuff tied round it, and there it was—a doll. When fifty dolls were made they had to be named, and it was great fun finding names for them all. The names were to be remembered by the colours. Alice was in pink, Julia in blue, Amy in purple, Jemima in yellow.

"Fifty will do for this evening," said Kitty. "I do so want to see them at home in the hedge."

"You can send in a char-woman to put the rooms in order," said Poppie. "I will make you a char-woman in a minute. Here she is, you see, in an ugly gray linen rag."

"Beautiful!" cried Kitty.

"And while she is at work," said Poppie, "we shall be busy enough giving our dolls their tempers."

"Tempers?" said Kitty.

"Oh, yes! You know they would all be the same if they were not different. Now Jemima here is so sulky that sometimes it is downright dreadful to live with her. Alice has a very sweet temper. Julia is peppery, but she is very kind. Amy will cry at the least thing; and Caroline is always flying into a passion."

Kitty was in raptures with this new idea.

"And we had better make some of them clever, and some of them stupid," she cried, clapping her hands, "and some of them idle, and others industrious. Dear, dear! what a time I shall have with a hundred of them. What do you do, Poppie, when they get outrageous?"

"Put them in disgrace," said Poppie; "all the naughty ones by themselves, and don't go near them for two or three days. They soon get tired of being treated like

that, and are glad to see you coming to forgive them."

"This is delightful!" said Kitty. "Now my dolls have such goody faces, every one of them, that you cannot imagine them bad. I have often tried to pretend they were cross and angry, but when I saw them smiling at me I thought they looked so much better than me that I could not scold or punish them."

"That is the best of these dolls," said Poppie. "They have no faces, and so you can pretend anything you like with them. They never look either good or bad if you come to see them quite close, and so you can have them anything you please."

After the fifty new dolls had got their names and their tempers and characters all bestowed on them, the children proceeded to arrange them in their apartments in the hedge, and even Nurse Green admitted that they looked a very gay company in their pleasant home among the leaves. When all this was done Nurse told the children that it was quite tea time, and that they had better return with her to the house.

So the remaining precious scraps of silks and stuffs were carefully put in a

bag, and it was decided that no more dolls need be made till to-morrow. And they all went in to their tea, and found that Mrs. Dale had baked some exceedingly nice tea-cakes for them, which she had buttered hot, and was keeping in the oven.

"I was just going to send out for you, Mrs. Green," she said, "for if your young folks be like the young folks I know, they will enjoy one of my home-made cakes for their tea."

And so they did, I can tell you. And that night Kitty dreamed that she had a thousand dolls, and that they were all walking and talking round her. One of them was so naughty that she thought she must punish it; but it ran all round the field, and scampered so fast that she could not catch it. Then she thought it turned into a frog, and sat croaking at her in a wet place at the bottom of the field.

"Oh dear! what a funny dream!" said Kitty, rubbing her eyes after she wakened and saw the sun shining. "I wonder how my hedge dollies really are this morning!"

CHAPTER VII.

BUNKO DOES TWO NAUGHTY THINGS.

THINK I told you that the little Hazels hoped Farmer Dale would give them all gardens of their own while they stayed at the farm; and so he did, for he was a very kind man.

He marked off a piece of ground about two yards square for each child, and the little gardens lay below a high wall which was covered with unripe fruit.

The farmer dug up some roots of simple flowers that could not be hurt by transplanting, and put them down again in the children's beds; each child having a little spade and rake to keep their gardens in order.

All were satisfied but Bunko. He wanted to see his garden crowded with blooming flowers, the best that were to be seen about the place. He grumbled a good deal, and

said he did not care about a garden unless it was as handsome as could be.

"Very well, my dear," said Nurse. "You can give up your bed again to Farmer Dale."

However, Bunko did not mean to do any such thing. Instead of that he did something very naughty, which I am going to tell you about.

He got up very early one morning and dressed himself without making any noise. Then he looked in Nurse Green's work-basket where he found her large scissors, and he ran out to the garden with them in his hand.

It was a most lovely morning, the birds all singing, and the sun shining on the flowers sprinkled with dew. Bunko marched round and round, and up and down all the garden paths, looking for the finest newly-blown roses, and the handsomest blossoms of all kinds. Wherever he saw a beautiful flower he cut it off almost by the head, and ran away and stuck it down in the mould of his garden bed.

Before breakfast time his garden was all blooming with the finest flowers, but not one of them could grow, of course.

"Come and see my garden," he said to

the other children after breakfast. "Such beautiful flowers have come up in the night!"

"Have they really!" cried Kitty, and Rosie clapped her hands. "Perhaps they have come up in mine too!" said she. But Rosie's was a very shaggy little garden, and her plants were not likely to take root because she was always poking at them with her rake.

Bunko led them all off to the garden, and there was his bed completely covered with beautiful flowers.

"How strange!" said Kitty, "and they have such little short stalks too. Did you plant any seed last night, Bunko?"

"No," said Bunko, getting very red. He did not want to tell any fibs about the matter, but he was determined to give everyone a surprise.

The children stood all round wondering at Bunko's treasures, when presently Nurse Green was seen coming down the path. Then Bunko began to feel uneasy, for he knew that Nurse would find him out.

"Look, Nurse, look at Bunko's garden!" cried Rosie, running to meet Nurse.

"Well, you have a show of flowers, Bunko!" said Nurse, coming up to the spot.

"But stay; why, these are cut flowers—all cut off by their heads and stuck down in the earth."

"Oh, no, Nurse! Bunko says they grew up last night."

"I didn't quite say that," said Bunko, beginning to shift about from one leg to the other. "I meant they all got here since last night."

"And my best work-scissors lying on the damp path!" exclaimed Nurse. "Well, you *are* a naughty boy, Bunko. When did you do all this mischief?"

"I don't think you need call it mischief," said Bunko. "The bed looks beautiful, I'm sure. I got up quite early this morning and did it when you were all asleep."

"And stole Mrs. Dale's flowers?"

"I did not steal them," said Bunko, ready to cry. "I cut them off quite carefully and stuck them in the ground. They are getting on beautifully here, and there are plenty more upon the bushes still."

"Well, I'm sure I don't know what Mr. Dale will say to you," said Nurse.

"Will he be angry?" said Bunko.

"I should think he would, to see you behave so after all his kindness. You had better go and tell him yourself," said Nurse.

"I know *I* should be ashamed to speak of your conduct."

"I would rather tell Mrs. Dale," said Bunko, after a few minutes' reflection.

"Then go, my dear, at once. She is in the kitchen making such a nice pudding, and all for the dinner of a naughty boy. I don't know how I can allow you to have any of it."

Bunko's face grew very long at hearing this, for he was exceedingly fond of nice things to eat. He turned away and walked down the garden path very slowly, and when he got as far as the outside of the kitchen window, he stood looking in and felt afraid to venture any further.

Mrs. Dale was busy making her pudding, and her hands were all covered with flour. Glancing up, she saw Bunko standing outside the window watching her, and looking very anxious and sorrowful.

She nodded and smiled at him kindly. "Do you want anything, my dear?" she said, but Bunko could not hear her through the window. Then she dusted the flour off her hands and flung the window open.

"Do you wish for anything, Bunko?"

"It isn't that, Mrs. Dale," said Bunko; 'but I'm dreadfully afraid you'll be angry.

Nurse says you will not give me any pudding when you hear it."

"Oh, come now!" said kind Mrs. Dale, "it must be something very bad indeed to deserve such a punishment as that!"

Mrs. Dale knew that Bunko was fond of cakes and puddings, and she was the sort of pleasant woman who likes to give people what they enjoy. She was quite sure before the little boy told his fault, that whatever it might be she would not deprive him of his pudding.

Bunko, however, did not know this, and his heart was getting heavier and heavier. Nurse had thought the cutting of the flowers such a shocking piece of naughtiness; and Mrs. Dale's puddings were so extremely good, nicer, because newer to him than the sweets he was accustomed to at home. This one, he could see, was a strawberry-jam roll, with the ends left on, which Bunko thought the most delicious thing that could be made.

However, he thought he had better come out with his confession at once and know his fate.

"I cut a lot of flowers in the garden," he said, "and stuck them down to make my bed look pretty."

"Well, that was rather naughty of you,"

said Mrs. Dale. "You know you ought to have asked me first."

"I was afraid you would not allow me," said Bunko. "If I had thought you would I should have asked you."

Mrs. Dale laughed. "That is frank at all events," she said. "You were determined to have the flowers at any cost."

"Yes," said Bunko, "I wanted to boast over the girls. And they were so surprised at first; only Nurse came and told, they never would have found it out."

"Well, my dear, I'm sure I'm glad you made your garden pretty for once," said Mrs. Dale, smiling again at Bunko's big troubled eyes which were fixed on her face; "only you mustn't do it again, because we like our flowers to last on the bushes. You can bring the ones you have cut into the house, and we will put them in water in a jar."

"And—" began Bunko, still looking anxious.

"Well, my dear?"

"Do you think you can let me have my pudding?" asked Bunko.

"Bless your heart, yes!" laughed Mrs. Dale. "Run away and tell Nurse that she mustn't be too hard upon you!"

"Oh! thank you," cried Bunko, breaking into beaming smiles; and then he flew away as fast as he could to tell his good news in the garden.

"She isn't a bit angry, and she will give me my pudding, and she says she is glad my garden looked pretty for once, and that Nurse is not to be too hard upon me!"

Nurse shook her head. "I am afraid Mrs. Dale is going to spoil you, my boy," she said. "You must try to be very good after being so easily forgiven."

"Oh! she didn't think it so dreadful at all," said Bunko, quite conceitedly. Having got out of his trouble he began to think he had done rather a clever thing. "Mrs. Dale says she wants these flowers when I have quite done with them, and is going to put them in water in a jar."

"I am afraid you are not a good boy yet," said Nurse; "however, I hope you will take care and not get into another scrape. Kitty, you may help Bunko to gather up the flowers for Mrs. Dale."

"No, I would rather gather them all myself," said Bunko. "Go away, Kitty, and mind your own affairs."

"Bunko, did you not hear me speak?" said Nurse.

"I did not want to hear you," said Bunko. "Mrs. Dale is a far kinder woman than you are."

"Bunko, put down those flowers and go away by yourself till I have time to talk to you," said Nurse. And Bunko dropped the flowers out of his hands suddenly all about the path, and walked off whistling, with his hands in his pockets.

Nurse and Kitty and Rosie then began to gather the cut flowers, taking them all up out of the earth, into which they were loosely stuck.

They were so busy picking out the flowers and shaking the mould off their stalks and putting them together, that they did not notice what little Ba was about. In the meantime she was hard at work just behind them tugging at a root of primulas in Poppie's bed, which she thought ought to come up as well as the others. They did not know what she was doing till they heard a fall and a cry, and there was Ba flat on her back on the path, with her little fat legs in the air, and the clump of uprooted primulas clasped in her hands!

The root had given way with her suddenly, and she had fallen, of course.

"Oh, Ba, Ba, what have you been doing?" said Nurse, picking her up.

"Me poof fows too?" said Ba, winking off her tears and flourishing her root. She meant to say that she had been pulling up the flowers too.

"Ba is too small to poof the fows," said Nurse; and she gave the root to Kitty to plant again; and then they all went in to dinner.

Bunko had his pudding with the rest, and Nurse did not say anything to him about his rudeness to her. She expected that he would come to her at some quiet moment in the afternoon when the other children were not with her, and ask her pardon, as he had been used to do before. But the day passed over and Bunko did not show any signs of repentance.

The next morning Bunko wakened again very early, and he lay thinking of what fun he had had the day before, and how Mrs. Dale had not thought him very naughty. He had had his pudding, and even Nurse had not scolded him for his rudeness to her. It was very nice being here, he thought, where you could do what you liked and the people of the place did not think you naughty. It was only nurses who

thought people so very naughty, and even Nurse Green did not say so much now that Mrs. Dale took his part.

Thinking over all this Bunko made up his mind that he would have a little more fun, and he got up and dressed himself and went out to look around him.

Into the garden he went as before, and marched about; and he soon began to examine the fruit on the trees, and he felt quite sure that a great deal of it was ripe. Farmer Dale had said the children were not to touch it till it was ripe, and that as soon as it should be so he would give them a fine feast of it.

Bunko looked at the gooseberries as they hung on the bushes, and noticed that a great many of them had turned red. They were certainly quite hard, but then why should they turn red unless they were ripe? Bunko picked first one and then another off the bushes, and put them into his mouth. They were not sweet, but they had a sharp, sour flavour which Bunko liked greatly. He stopped at one bush eating for about ten minutes, and then he filled his pockets with gooseberries and walked on.

Presently he noticed a branch of an apple-tree loaded with a great many apples, and

some of these, though quite green, had streaks of red upon their sides. Bunko said to himself that they were as ripe as possible, and he ate about five or six of them while he strolled about the garden paths.

When breakfast time came he was not very hungry. Nurse asked him if anything was the matter, but he said, "Oh, no, nothing at all." He looked very pale, however, and could hardly swallow a morsel of bread.

Breakfast was hardly over before Bunko began to twist himself about.

"What *is* the matter with you, Bunko?" said Nurse.

"I think my milk was too hot or too cold, or something," said Bunko.

"It was neither hot nor cold," said Nurse; "just warm—as nice as possible for a little boy's breakfast."

"Then there must have been knives baked up in the bread," said Bunko, "for something is stabbing me awfully."

"*Stabbing* you!" said Nurse.

"Oh, oh, *oh!*" roared Bunko.

"What is the matter with the child?" exclaimed Nurse.

"Pains!" shouted Bunko. "Pains! pains! pains! Something is tearing me to pieces!"

He had now wriggled down from his chair and was rolling about. Nurse took him up in her arms, and as she did so she felt the hard gooseberries in his pocket like a lump against her arm.

"What have you got in your pocket, Bunko?"

"Gooseberries," roared Bunko. "They are quite ripe."

"Oh, my goodness!" said Nurse. "No wonder the child has got pains."

She carried him in her arms into Mrs. Dale's parlour.

"Mrs. Dale," she said, "here is a little boy well punished for stealing your gooseberries."

"I didn't steal!" shouted Bunko. "Farmer Dale said I might have some when they were ripe."

Nurse turned out his pocket, and a plateful of hard green gooseberries rolled from it.

"Oh, oh, *oh!*" bellowed Bunko.

"We must give him some hot ginger," said Mrs. Dale kindly, but she was really shocked at this second piece of naughtiness of Bunko's.

By this time Bunko was in such a dreadful state of pain that they had to undress

him and put him in a hot bath, and then into bed Nurse dosed him with rhubarb, a thing he hated, but he had to swallow it. After an hour or two the pains began to get better, and he fell asleep.

When he wakened he found Nurse sitting at his bedside, and he sat up and threw his arms round her neck.

"Oh, Nurse!" he said, "I *am* so sorry. I see how bad I have been."

"Yes, dear, you have been naughty, and ungrateful to Mr. and Mrs. Dale. But if you are really sorry we need not say much more about it. You have been punished quite enough by suffering so much pain. But I don't think you were sorry for your first naughtiness, Bunko?"

"No, I wasn't," said Bunko. "Mrs. Dale was so kind that I thought it was all right and I couldn't have been really so bad. And then I was rude to you."

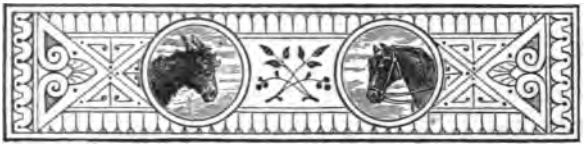
"Yes, that pained me very much, dear. But I thought you would be sorry when you came to think of it."

"I suppose God sent me the pains to make me sorry," said Bunko. "And, indeed, I am sorry. I will try never to be so bad again."

So then Nurse and Bunko hugged and

kissed, and the little boy was put into his clothes again, and went back to the other children looking quite weak and pale.

That evening he asked pardon of Mr. and Mrs. Dale, and promised not to disobey them any more.



CHAPTER VIII.

PRETENDING TO BE FAIRIES.

IT was beautiful sunny weather, and the children were out of doors all the livelong day taking pleasant walks in the shady woods or playing under the trees nearer home.

The farmer's men had already begun to cut hay down in the great meadow, and Bunko and Jock were often there, as the farmer liked to take them with him and to show them how the hay-making was done.

Kitty and Rosie were often left to make plays for themselves, for Nurse did not like them to go down to the meadow without her. In the daytime, while Ba took a sleep, Nurse would sit beside her, and then Nana would take her sewing out under a tree and allow the two little girls to frisk about at their will.

One day Kitty was tired of all the plays

she had invented. Poppie and Bet were still at school, and Rosie, though a dear, good, little thing, and always ready to do anything Kitty told her, was not quite quick enough or old enough to be always a satisfactory companion for Kitty.

Kitty had been lying under a tree turning over the pages of an old fairy-tale book and looking at the pictures. Suddenly she jumped up and cried out,

"I have it! Rosie, you and I will pretend to be fairies!"

"But we aren't fairies," said Rosie.

"Of course not. That's the fun of it," said Kitty. "If we were we needn't pretend."

"No," said Rosie; "we'd be real fairies then."

"We are going to pretend," said Kitty.

"Oh yes; we will pitend," said Rosie.

"Now, just look here," said Kitty, showing a picture in the book. "There's *no* difference between that fairy and us except that she has wings and stands upon one leg with a long rod in her hand. That's her wand, and you see how she points her other toe."

"What is it pointing at?" asked Rosie.

"Oh, nothing!" said Kitty. "What does

that matter? Now, Rosie, try if you can stand on one leg and point your other toe. I'm afraid you're too fat."

"Am I?" said Rosie, looking disappointed.

"I think so," said Kitty "Fairies are always thin like me. But perhaps there might be a fat fairy now and again. Try if you can stand on one leg."

Rosie tried, and with great difficulty drew up one little, short, fat leg, and stood shaking and wavering on the other.

"Now, hold out one of your arms, and here is a rod for a wand. You must slant yourself off as if you were just going to fly away. This way, you see."

And Kitty threw herself into the attitude of the fairy at once, and stood so quite triumphantly.

Rosie tried to imitate her, but overbalanced herself and rolled over on the grass.

"That is it, you see," said Kitty shaking her up again, "you're too fat."

"I'm too fat," echoed Rosie disconsolately.

"You must try again," said Kitty. "There, that is better. We must take off our pinafores and put wreaths of flowers round our heads. That will make such a difference,

you know, that nobody will know us. I will be a good fairy and you will be a bad one."

Rosie's little red lip went down. "I don't want to be a bad fairy," she said.

"Oh, you little goose! As if it mattered. It's only pretending, you know."

"Oh, yes, it's only pitendin'!" said Rosie, cheering up.

"I would let you be the good one if you liked," said Kitty, "only the good fairies who grant the wishes and things in the pictures are always thin. I don't know whether the bad ones are fat or not; but at all events it will make more variety if you are bad; as you see I *have* to be good."

"Very well," said Rosie, "I will be bad."

That point settled the little girls sat down to make the crowns of flowers which they were to wear on their heads as fairies. Large white daisies with round gold hearts, and sweet-smelling woodbine, and wild pink roses out of the hedge were all woven together very cleverly by Kitty, who had a great love for flowers, and could arrange them very nicely. When Rosie's wreath was finished Kitty put it on her little sister's head.

"It *is* nice," said Kitty, "and you do look too pretty to be bad. But it can't be helped."

"No, it can't be helped," repeated Rosie contentedly.

Then Kitty finished her own crown and put it on, and skipped away to a pool of still water under the trees and looked at herself.

"I am *exactly* like a fairy!" she cried, clapping her hands. "Oh Rosie, if we had only some stiff paper to make wings!"

"Mrs. Dale has some," said Rosie, "I saw it in the cupboard in her parlour."

"Oh, dear Rosie, do run and ask her to give us some, and to lend us her scissors. Tell her we want it for a play; and we sha'n't litter, because it's out of doors."

Off went Rosie and found Mrs. Dale just sitting down with her sewing in the parlour after a busy morning's work.

Rosie's little dimpled face came peeping in at the door, and a pair of brown eyes as soft as velvet were raised beseechingly to her face.

"Please, Mrs. Dale, Kitty and I are making a play, and will you give us some of your stiff white paper and the loan of your scissors? It isn't to litter the house, because we are out of doors."

"Bless the child! of course I will. But how much do you want? What is it for?"

"Oh, it's to make wings," said Rosie, "but that is a great secret. Nobody would believe in us if they knew our wings were paper."

Mrs. Dale gave Rosie two or three sounding kisses on her dimpled cheeks, and said something to herself about angels going about without wings every day; but Rosie did not hear what she was saying, being quite intent on doing Kitty's errand successfully. In Rosie's eyes there was no one so clever or so delightful as Kitty.

In a few minutes she was off again, running as fast as her little fat legs would carry her, back under the trees with a parcel of paper in her arms and a pair of scissors (safe in a leather sheath) in her hands.

"Splendid!" said Kitty, spreading out the paper on the grass, and beginning to cut out the wings. "They go like this," she said, looking at the picture attentively, and then making great cuts. "There, I think that will do. Now, we must have some pins to pin them on."

Again Rosie ran to Mrs. Dale and begged a few pins. She came back with

a nice little round pin-cushion all stuck round with bright pins.

"Now, Rosie, off with your pinafore and let me pin on your wings!"

Rosie's pinafore was soon upon the grass, and Kitty set to work to fasten two great flaps of stiff paper on her shoulders.

"You see we must stand with our faces to the people always, or they might see the pinning," said Kitty.

"Do real fairies not have their wings pinned on?" asked Rosie.

"No, you little silly! Of course they grow out of them."

"Oh!" said Rosie.

"There now! this is the right place. Give me a long pin—"

Rosie screamed. "The pin has gone into my back."

"Oh, dear, what a thing it is to be only people! If you were a real fairy you would never have felt that stab."

"But I'm not real," sobbed Rosie, "and it did hurt."

"There, now!" said Kitty, mopping up her tears and kissing her, "your wings are on all right, and don't cry any more."

There was even more trouble about getting on Kitty's wings, for Rosie was not

so handy as Kitty, who got a few stabs with pins herself before all was arranged. The wings and crowns on, there remained only to pluck up a pair of nice rods, and peel them till they looked quite white.

"Now we are finished," said Kitty; "we ought to have stars on the end of our wands, but I am afraid we cannot get any."

"The stars only come at night," said Rosie, shaking her little head.

"And even then we couldn't get at them," said Kitty sagely; "they are a great deal too high up."

"I saw one in that tree last night," said Rosie. "If somebody climbed he could have caught it."

"Oh dear!" said Kitty, "what a little goose you are! The stars are all in the sky. We must only pretend that we have got them on our wands."

"Oh yes, we will pitend!" said Rosie.

They now started off and ran towards the high mossy bank, on the top of which they intended to appear as fairies. Tall trees stood here and there along the bank, and down below it lay the great meadow where Farmer Dale's men were cutting the hay. They climbed up the bank. Kitty

was up in a moment, but Rosie stuck fast in the middle of the slope, and Kitty had to stretch down and haul her up.

"You really are too fat for a fairy!" said Kitty, "even for a bad one. But I must make the best of you. Now, stand on one leg, Rosie, there's a dear, and point your toe like this. Look at me, and do the same as I do."

Kitty "slanted herself off" like the fairies in the pictures, pointed one toe, and extended her wand. Rosie stood beside her waggling on one fat little leg and trying to point her toe, while her wand dropped like a fishing-rod.

"Oh, Rosie, *do* try a little better!" cried Kitty, striving to look round at Rosie without turning her own head. "Oh, dear! the men in the meadow see us and are stopping their work. They really do think we are fairies; and oh, what fun it will be!"

"They don't know we're pitendin'!" said Rosie, waggling more than ever.

"They're going to stop working and come to ask for wishes. Now, Rosie, I am going to grant them all their wishes, so you mustn't interfere, as a bad fairy, you know. Bad fairies always spoil things; but you mustn't."

"No, I won't," said Rosie, "but I wish they would come. My leg won't stay steady any longer."

"It hasn't been steady at all," said Kitty scornfully. "You are wiggle-waggling all the time. But I will speak to them, and perhaps they will think it is your badness —bad fairyness, you know—that makes you tremble and shake. Oh, here is Farmer Dale himself coming to look at us, and he seems quite frightened."

The farmer was indeed walking slowly up the meadow with his eyes fixed on the two little curious figures perched on the bank, and not the smallest sign of a smile on his face.

As soon as he had come within a few yards of them he stopped and stared.

"Why, these be fairies!" he cried out, quite loud.

"There now, Rosie!" whispered Kitty, "you heard what he said. I do believe we *are* fairies this minute. And he thinks we are."

"I'm breaking down, Kitty. Oh, I'm breaking down," murmured Rosie, in tones of distress.

"If you do I will never speak to you again," whispered Kitty, "just when every-

thing is happening so beautifully. Can you not feel that you are a fairy and that will keep you up?"

"No, I can't," said Rosie, "I'm only pitendin'."

"Well, hold up a little longer till I speak to Farmer Dale."

"Mortal! approach!" cried Kitty in her highest treble voice, "I am a good fairy. Do not fear."

"Oh, Kitty, I *can't* hold up," wailed Rosie in whisper.

"If you can't, then, you must roll down the bank and they will think you have vanished," said Kitty. "Fairies vanish."

Rosie instantly dropped her little tired leg, and scrambling down the back of the bank, sat contentedly in the hollow on the grass below, listening with admiration to Kitty making her speeches.

"My sister cannot bear the sight of mortals, and so she has vanished," said Kitty, still speaking in what she thought was like a fairy's voice. "But I am a different kind of fairy. I come to do you good. I will grant you any wishes you please."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Mr. Dale, lifting his hat.

KITTY AND ROSIE PRETEND TO BE FAIRIES.

PAGE 103.

"Oh, he never would speak like that if he didn't believe I was a real fairy," thought Kitty, but to her horror she suddenly felt that she too was beginning to waggle, and hoped Mr. Dale would make haste.

"Speak!" continued Kitty, "tell me your wish."

"Well!" said Farmer Dale, while a broad grin broke out all over his face, "my first wish will be that Miss Kitty would get a little sense."

These words came upon poor Kitty like a thunder-clap. Mr. Dale knew that she was only Kitty, pretending, after all. Her pointed toe dropped to the ground, her wand fell from her hand, and she immediately "vanished," slipping down the bank in a hurry, and nearly alighting on poor Rosie's head.

"Oh, Rosie, come home quick. He is laughing at us so dreadfully. He knows we were only pretending."

"It's very nice pitendin', though," said Rosie, "if you didn't waggle. We can do it again to-morrow, Kitty."

But Kitty did not like being found out. All the fun had gone out of the play for her, and she no longer felt herself a fairy.

"Come home, Rosie, fast!" she cried, and set off running towards the house.

Poor Rosie ran after her as fast as she could, but she could not keep up with Kitty, and besides one of her shoes stuck in a damp rutty place, and she went running on without it.

Nana, who was coming to call them home to tea, met her trudging along in her crown of flowers and her wings, with a shoe on one little fat foot and only a stocking on the other.

"Well, Miss Kitty is a curious little girl," said Nana, taking Rosie up in her arms and going back to look for the lost shoe. "Where has she gone off to now?"

But Kitty was behind a large tree-trunk pulling off her crown and wings, as she did not want to be laughed at when she went in to tea.

CHAPTER IX.

BUNKO IN THE HAYSTACK.

AFTER this came good times in the meadow for Kitty and Rosie too, for Nurse used to bring them there herself. A crowd of men and women were busy making the hay, which was all spread out over the ground, and had to be tossed about a good deal, so that the sun might dry every bit of it. Men with long pitchforks lifted it and flung it up in the air, and women in sun-bonnets took it in their arms and shook it all over the place.

All the children got pronged sticks and went about shaking and tossing the hay like the rest of the people; and I can tell you it was great fun.

Then Mrs. Dale would send their lunch to the meadow in a basket,—fine slices of sweet home-made bread and butter and

cans of milk, with tumblers to drink out of; and the children were so hungry that they thought nothing had ever tasted so nice before. After lunch the work began again, and even Ba rushed about with a stick in her hand, poking at the hay, and thinking that all these people were playing a funny game to amuse her.

After all this fun had gone on for some days the men began to carry the hay away to the higher end of the great meadow, and to build it into an enormous haystack; one of those great, long, tall ones which are as big as a house. After they had been building at it for some time they had to get ladders, to place against the lower part that was finished in order to go on with the upper part.

Bunko and Jock found the greatest delight in watching the men at work, and stood by helping them all they could. They were always wanting to climb the ladders and do some of the work up there, but the men told them they had better not, for sometimes the ladders were not quite steady, and little boys were not accustomed to their shaky ways.

Jock being older, and having more sense than Bunko, agreed that the men were

right, and the men, seeing that he was obedient, gave him many little jobs to do for them, which kept him quite happy. One of the men even held the ladder for him once, and allowed him to go up to the top and see what an unfinished haycock was like in its upper story. Jock came down quite satisfied, and went to work again, handing up the hay on a pitchfork.

Bunko then begged that he might be allowed to go up too, and again the ladder was held by a careful man while he went to the top. Bunko stood on the top rung and looked at the top of the haycock.

"Oh! what a delicious place to make a play in!" thought he. "If I only could come here by myself for a while when the men are away!"

He came down the ladder again and stood watching the work, and then he got tired of that and ran away to play somewhere else.

In about an hour he came back to see how the haycock was getting on, and found nobody near it. All the men were gone to dinner, and Jock had gone with them, having begun to look upon himself as one of Farmer Dale's hard-working servant men.

Bunko saw the ladder leaning against the haycock, and thought how nice it would be to climb up now and prance about on the top of the hay, and play there as long as he liked while the men were away.

He examined the ladder carefully, and fixed it well into the ground, and pushed it steadily against the haycock. Then he put his foot on it, and it felt quite firm. Up he went, step by step, and arrived safely at the top.

Standing on the top rung, he looked over into the middle of the haycock. There was a nice hollow place in the centre, and banks of hay all around it. Bunko put one knee on the close-packed hay on a level with the ladder, and cautiously dragged both legs, one after another, up on the highest part of the cock. Then he turned himself round and looked down. Oh! how high up he was, and as safe as possible!

Then he plunged down into the nice soft hollow in the top of the haycock, and began to dance about and sing with glee.

After this he made all kinds of plays for himself. He pretended that he was in a great ship all alone on the sea, and he hauled ropes and pulled sails about till he was tired. Then he was on a desert island,

and was building a hut for himself with piles of hay.

At last, when he was quite tired out, he lay down in the hollow place to rest, and thought this was the nicest bed he had ever lain upon. He lay on his back watching the birds that sometimes flew past high over the haycock up in the sky. Then he wondered when the men would be coming back from their dinner, and thought what fun it would be to lean over suddenly and look down at them and shout "Hurrah!" from the top of the haycock. And then suddenly Bunko fell sound asleep.

The warmth of his nook and of the summer air, and the sweet, rich smell of the hay had been too much for him, and there he lay as fast asleep as if it had been the middle of the night instead of mid-day.

After he had slept for some time the men came back from their dinner and began their work again. One of them went half-way up the ladder and called to the other men to toss the hay up to him.

"Come on, lads!" he cried, "toss away!" And Bunko heard the voice in his sleep, and thought he was in a ship such as he had made in his play, and that the sailors were shouting to each other.

The next moment a great bundle of hay was tossed into the middle of the haycock and covered up half of Bunko's body.

Bunko in his sleep began to feel dreadfully hot, and he dreamed he was in a house that was on fire.

"Toss away, lads!" cried the man on the ladder again, and Bunko dreamed that the firemen were shouting to him to jump out of the window. And then another great lot of hay was pitched right into the haycock and completely covered up Bunko.

He was very nearly smothered now, and certainly, if another bundle of hay had been thrown upon him before he wakened he would have been stifled to death, and never could have wakened in this world again.

However, the dream got so dreadful this time that Bunko wakened himself by shouting with all his might.

He was greatly frightened at finding himself buried in the hay, and began pushing it away and getting a little air to breathe as fast as he could.

At last he got his head up, and roared out with all his strength.

"I'm in the haycock. Sam, I'm in the haycock. Don't throw any more hay till I get out!"

Sam threw down his pitchfork. "As sure as I'm alive!" he said, "that young rascal has played us a trick."

"Get me out! Get me out!" roared Bunko. "My legs are ever so far down in the hay!"

"I suppose you can get out as well as you got in," said Sam, who thought he would tease him a little.

"I can't!" cried Bunko. "My legs are no use at all. They're down at the bottom of the haycock, and there's nothing but my nose above the hay."

"Well, stay there, then!" shouted Sam. "It makes the hay good, and keeps it sound, to have a fat little boy built up in it." And Sam grinned down at the other men, who were all laughing heartily at the foot of the haycock.

Bunko gave a wild yell. "Oh, I'll be drowned! I shall be drowned!" he cried, "and nobody will help me out."

"Don't frighten the child into fits," said one of the men below. "He's only a baby after all."

"I'm not a baby!" shouted Bunko; "and I'm not frightened into fits. You wouldn't like it yourselves though you are big men; and you have no right to murder me. I

tell you I'll box you all round as soon as I get out of this."

The men all laughed loudly at this, and some of them said:

"He's a plucky little chap after all. You mustn't tease him any more, Sam."

And then Sam stood on the top rung of the ladder and dived his two long arms into the loose hay in the hollow of the cock and hauled Bunko up by the shoulders.

"My, but you are piping hot, boy!" said Sam, as Bunko's round fat face came to light, looking as red as a boiled lobster.

"I'm going to fight you as soon as you have time," said Bunko in the most determined manner, as Sam placed him safely on the ground.

"All right, my man. After supper, when the sun has gone down, and we are all a bit cooler. It's too hot just this minute for a boxing-match; isn't it, Bunko? Run home now, lad, and get your dinner."

"Is it our dinner-time yet?" said Bunko, startled.

"I think it is indeed. And Nurse is scouring the country looking for you."

"I suppose I had better go, then," said Bunko quietly, and set off running as fast as possible towards the house.

CHAPTER X.

THE WET DAY.

JUST after the great haycock was finished the children wakened one morning to find the rain falling thick and fast, and the sky quite dark all around.

A fire was lighted in the nursery, for it was quite cold as well as wet.

"Oh, dear, has the winter come back?" cried little Rosie.

"What shall we do with ourselves, Nursie dear?" asked Kitty in despair.

"Come, come, cheer up!" said Nurse. "This is only a day to water the flowers. To-morrow it will be as bright as ever. Nana, can't you make a play of blind-man's-buff?"

Jock put down his book, and Bunko left off painting pictures for Mrs. Dale's back

parlour, and Rosie and Ba jumped about in delight.

Kitty was made blind-man first, and then each of the children had a turn. When little Ba got the handkerchief tied over her eyes she pushed it up and saw every one quite well. But nobody scolded her because she was so small. She thought herself very clever because she caught everybody all round.

Rosie couldn't catch any one at all, for she kept turning round and round in one spot, and was afraid to run about. Every one shook her little fat outstretched hand and ran away, and at last she got quite dizzy and tumbled down on the floor.

When Kitty was blind-man she danced about in the wildest manner, but generally caught the chairs, or the table, or wrapped her arms round the curtains thinking she had got hold of Nurse's skirts. Bunko knocked his head against things; but Jock was the one who managed to catch people, no matter how clever they were.

At last they all thought they would play Jock a trick, because he was getting so conceited about being able to catch everybody, and so as soon as he was blindfolded they opened the door softly and every

person in the room crept out on the lobby.

Jock went sweeping round the nursery with his arms whirling about like the sails of a windmill, but to his great surprise he could not catch anybody. Kitty or Bunko would step into the room for a moment and laugh out loud, and then slip out of the room again, so that it was a long time before Jock guessed that he was really all alone in the nursery. When he found out the trick he pulled off the handkerchief, and said it was not fair, and he would not play any more. And then they all settled down to paint and read, and after a while Nurse told them a story.

There was a long lobby outside the nursery, and it had a large window with a deep seat, and right in the middle of the wall stood an old-fashioned clock in a huge black case, looking almost like a tall high-shouldered woman in black with a round white face. Jock and Bunko used to laugh at this clock and call it their grand-aunt, because Farmer Dale had told them that he once had a grand-aunt who was the very image of it.

Jock and Bunko now made themselves comfortable in this large window on the

lobby, with their books and painting, and Nurse went into her own room to look for some pieces of ribbon to make new doll's sashes for Kitty and Rosie. Ba was standing by watching all that Nurse was doing, but after a few minutes she got tired of that and began to look about for some mischief to do. She soon spied Nurse Green's nice new parasol hanging by its handle from a hook in the wardrobe, low enough for her little hand to reach to, and she immediately seized it and flew off to the nursery with it to have some fun by herself. Nurse had her head in a large trunk at the time, and Kitty and Rosie were head and shoulders down in the same trunk, so that none of them saw little Ba toddle off with her prize.

As soon as Ba found herself in the nursery all alone she began to prance round the room with the parasol in her hand, digging the point of it into everything she met with; and at last she trotted over to the fire-place, where the coals had burned rather low, and she began, with great delight, to poke the fire with the parasol.

If the fire had been a good one the parasol would soon, of course, have been in flames; but, as it was, the end of the stick

burned and smouldered away, till there was nothing left of it but a blackened stump.

Ba was enchanted, and poked away with all her might, making the cinders fly right and left on the hearth. Presently Nurse missed her and came running into the nursery, followed by Kitty and Rosie.

"Oh, you naughty child! you bad little Ba! You have burned my parasol!"

Ba dropped the parasol, and stood with her two little feet planted close together, her small fists doubled up, and her baby brows knit into a scowl.

"I did not burn your soul!" she said, looking up at Nurse from under her brows.

"Oh, my! what language!" cried Nurse. "How awful you do sound, Ba!"

"What did she say?" asked Kitty.

"It's too dreadful to be repeated," said Nurse. "She did not burn my soul. Of course she means sol, parasol; but there! I don't know where babies get the things they say."

"Your best parasol, Nurse! Isn't it a pity?" said Kitty, picking it up.

"Yes, my dear; I shall have to take my great green umbrella to church on Sundays; but never mind, it's no use to scold a tiny thing like Ba. Come here, Ba, and give me

a kiss, and you mustn't do such a naughty thing again."

Just then Mrs. Dale put her head in at the door.

"Will you kindly look at your watch, Mrs. Green?" she said, "for I can't believe but it's more than half-past three o'clock. That's what it is by our old clock on the lobby, and I'm twenty years listening to it striking and ticking in this old house, and I never knew it to go wrong before."

"Why, it's half-past four!" said Nurse, looking at her watch.

"I knew it!" said Mrs. Dale. "I've been dying for my tea this hour, and yet I wouldn't take it till the clock would strike four. Dale will hardly believe me when I tell him the grand-aunt is gone wrong."

"Indeed I have been wishing for my tea too," said Nurse, "but I did not like hurrying you, Mrs. Dale."

"Well, well! I am puzzled. And indeed you ought to have rung your bell, Mrs. Green. The tea will be ready in five or six minutes; and I have such a nice little lot of cakes in the oven!"

Away went Mrs. Dale, and the tea came up; and after she had had her own tea Mrs. Dale came up again to look at the old

clock on the lobby. There it stood still pointing to half-past three. The grand-aunt had evidently got into a sulk and would not move.

"Something has put her out of temper, Mrs. Dale," said Jock, grinning over the edges of his book from the lobby window. "She's jealous of Nurse Green's watch. You sometimes ask Nurse the time, and she doesn't like it."

"Well, I had some one to tell me the time this afternoon," said Mrs. Dale. "I must only leave her to Mr. Dale. When he comes home he'll find out what's the matter with her."

That evening, after Farmer Dale had had his supper, the children heard the tramp, tramp of his heavy boots coming up the wooden stair, and they knew he was going to take a look at the old clock.

Jock and Bunko hid behind one of the doors of the lobby, and stood listening and expecting to have some fun.

Nurse Green came out of the nursery to speak to Mr. Dale.

"It's very singular, isn't it?" she said.

"Singularest thing I've known to happen this many a day, ma'am," said the farmer. "Man and boy I've been intimate friends

with that clock, and never saw her wrong a quarter of an inch. They don't make such clocks now-a-days, Mrs. Green. But all things come to their end sometime, I suppose, and my poor old grand-aunt's time is maybe up."

"Oh no, I hope not," said Nurse Green. "It's only some little hitch inside that can be put right."

"Never knew her to hitch, inside or out," said the farmer. "However, we'll give her the chance, Mrs. Green, and take a look inside."

With this he opened the door of the clock-case, and a curious sight met his eyes; for there was Ba's oldest doll (the one with the paint all kissed off, and nearly all the hair pulled out, and only one eye left in its head), there was this miserable doll tied by her neck to the pendulum of the old clock!

A shout from the farmer, and a shriek from Nurse Green, and then an explosion of laughter was heard from behind the door where Jock and Bunko were hiding.

"Well, Mr. Dale, I *am* ashamed of my boys!" burst forth Nurse. "I really sha'n't be surprised if you turn them out of your house to-morrow."

"Come, come, Mrs. Green!" said Farmer

Dale, who was shaking with laughter himself, "we can't put old heads on young shoulders, and a wet day *is* a trial to lads like yours. At all events I'm main glad to see it's nothin' that's got altogether wrong, like, with my old grand-aunt's constitution. Come out here, you young rascals, and let me give you the flailing you deserve!"

Jock and Bunko came jumping out of their hiding-place, and came running up to Mr. Dale with their hands over their ears.

"Aye, aye! You may well cover your ears, for you know well they ought to be pulled. However, there, I was going to tell you to-night that you should have a feast of fruit to-morrow! I suppose I had better forbid it now. Eh, Mrs. Green?"

"Oh, Mr. Dale! it was only fun. And I hope it hasn't done the clock any harm."

"That means that you want the fruit. Well, we'll see about it to-morrow. In the meantime the old lady's tongue is wagging away as briskly as ever, I see. I sha'n't even have to bring the clock-doctor to see her."

"Is there such a person as a clock-doctor?" asked Jock.

"Not nearer to here than London," said

Mr. Dale, laughing at Jock's sudden earnestness.

And that night Jock lay awake in his bed quite half an hour wondering about the clock-doctor, and supposing it must be the kind of person who came every month to keep the clocks in his father's house in order.

CHAPTER XI.

CHASING THE DUCKS TO DEATH.

THE next was a very hot morning, and when the boys were away with Farmer Dale as usual looking after the hay, Kitty and Rosie were playing about the fields under the trees, while Nana sat at her sewing on a pleasant mossy seat in the shade.

The little girls first visited all the hedge dolls and had great fun with them. They had now five hundred dolls between them, and they were all living comfortably in their hedge houses. That morning the lady dolls went out shopping and bought a great many things that they did not want, and Kitty told them they ought not to spend so much money. Then the dairy-maid wanted Kitty and Rosie to taste her butter, and the cook had a quarrel with the kitchen-maid, and several hedge children were

found to have the measles, and altogether so many things happened that Kitty and Rosie had quite a busy time of it for about two hours, arranging all the affairs of the hedge households.

After all these matters had been attended to Kitty and Rosie were quite tired and hot, and they went wandering away down to a pretty little stream of water that flowed at the foot of the fields all surrounded by trees on each side.

It was a cool, lonely spot. Sometimes the cows found their way down here and stood up to their knees in the water, seeming to enjoy it so much. Kitty and Rosie were rather afraid of the cows, though they liked to look at them from a distance. However it was generally later in the day when the cows got into the brook, and now there was nothing near to frighten the little girls.

"Oh Kitty!" said Rosie, "let us pitend to be cows! My feet are so hot. Can't we get into the water?"

"It would be delightful," said Kitty; "I wonder would Nurse scold."

Rosie stood on a stone and dipped her little foot into the stream.

"Oh Rosie, you naughty girl, to wet your

shoe! If we go in we must take off our shoes and stockings."

"Must we?" said Rosie. "I can't take off mine."

"Then I must take them off for you. Come up here into the grass out of the wet and I will pull them off. I don't think Nurse or Nana would mind, as it so hot, and if we don't wet our clothes."

Kitty knew all the time that she ought to go and ask leave, but she was afraid that if she did she should be told it was just near dinner-time, or something like that, and that she should not be allowed to do as she wished.

Kitty had her good days and her rather bad days. On some days she would not do anything naughty for the world, but at other times she could not believe that things she wanted so much to do were naughty. At all events she did not like to believe it, and was ready to take the chance of doing wrong.

Well, this was one of the days when Kitty felt a wild desire to do what she liked, and so she kept telling herself and Rosie that she thought Nurse would not mind. Off went Rosie's shoes and stockings. The stockings required a great deal

of tugging before they would come off, for they were quite wet already and they clung to her little fat feet, but at last they were gone, flung away on the grass, and Rosie's tiny pink toes stood bare on the stones.

"Now, Rosie, don't go in without me!" cried Kitty. "If you were to fall you would be all in a sop of wet, and what could we say to Nurse then?"

So Rosie waited patiently while Kitty stripped off her own stockings and shoes and cast them away with her sister's among the dock leaves, and then, her little, slender, white legs bare to the knees, she caught Rosie's hand and they trotted off together to the verge of the stream.

They paddled in very cautiously at first, but after a little while grew quite bold and scampered about in the water, splashing each other as they went.

"Now Rosie," said Kitty, "don't you go out past that stone, because if you slipped or put your foot in a hole you couldn't help falling, you are so fat."

"Couldn't I?" said Rosie, staring at Kitty with her round dark eyes very wide open at the thought of such a danger, and all her little skirts gathered up in a lump in her short arms. "I wish I wasn't so fat."

"Yes, I'm sure you do," said Kitty, "but you can't help it. Just stand there like a good child and see how far I can go out because I am tall and thin. It's no use your wishing to be thin, because you know you were born fat."

"Yes," said Rosie meekly and looking at Kitty with admiration.

"It isn't your fault, so you needn't fret about it, but just watch and see what fun I can have because I am thin." And Kitty walked out till the water came up to her little bare knees, and then, holding her skirts carefully aloft, began to jump and sing in the water.

Just then, however, she happened to turn her eyes towards the grass and trees by the river-side to assure herself that the cows were not coming to stand all round her in the water, and, to her great dismay, she saw, not cows, but an ill-looking man and woman stooping over the shoes and stockings which the children had left among the dock leaves.

"Oh, Rosie, look!" she said, and in a minute the man and woman were gone and the shoes and stockings with them.

"They've taken our shoes and stockings," cried Kitty.

"Oh dear!" said Rosie. "Will they not bring them back? Call to them, Kitty."

"They wouldn't mind. They're *thieves*," said Kitty scornfully.

"It wasn't my fat this time, Kitty dear?" said Rosie anxiously.

"No, you little goose. How could your fat make people steal?"

"No, it couldn't," said Rosie, her mind quite relieved. She had got an idea from Kitty's constant complaints of her fat that it was to blame for everything that went wrong with their plays. This point being settled she was content.

"We can run home in our bare feet," she said gleefully. "Nurse has plenty of shoes and stockings for us. Won't it be fun?"

"Oh yes," said Kitty, "but Nurse will be so angry. If you were not a baby you would think about that."

Snubbed again, Rosie's dimples went out of her cheeks and she looked as grave as Kitty.

However they were not allowed to stand much longer thinking about what had happened, for Nana now appeared among the trees and came running down to the river.

"You naughty children! Come out of the water directly. Nurse *is* so angry; you

shall see. Enough to give you your death of cold, you bad little girls; and you might have been drowned in some hole!"

"Don't scold, Nana," said Kitty. "Nurse will say enough to us. And oh, Nana dear, our shoes and stockings are stolen!"

"Just what might have been expected," said Nana. "Well, Nurse will be in a state when she hears of this."

"But we have more shoes and stockings," persisted Rosie.

"And do you think your papa and mamma have nothing to do but spend their money on shoes and stockings for you, that you may allow tramps to steal them? Shoes and stockings cost a great deal of money."

"So they do," said Kitty, "and some people have none at all."

"Why can't we have none at all?" cried Rosie. "It would be a great deal nicer."

"Oh, you little goose, your feet would be cut," said Kitty, who was now quite penitent. "Nana dear, what do you think Nurse will do?"

"Put you in bed," said Nana; "that is what is done to wet children to keep them from catching cold. Then she will go down on her knees and thank God that

you were not drowned, or that the tramps did not take you, or that the cows did not come into the water and trample you."

"Oh dear!" sighed Kitty, "why is there such *wrongness* in everything nice? I thought we could have done it so good. And I had a large pocket-handkerchief in my pocket to dry our feet first, and then we could have finished them off with our petticoats."

"Nice treatment for your clean white petticoats!" said Nana.

By this time they had left the grass and trees and got out upon the road.

"Oh! the gravel hurts my feet," cried Rosie.

"I think so indeed," said Nana, and lifted her up in her arms to carry her the rest of the way.

Kitty said nothing, though the little stones hurt her too; but she trudged along valiantly by Nana's side.

Nurse came out to meet them at the farmhouse door.

"Oh! Nurse," cried Kitty, "it was all my fault. We went in the river and our shoes and stockings are stolen. And don't punish Rosie—only me!"

"I am sorry for you, and ashamed of

you, Kitty," said Nurse. "I thought my eldest girl had more sense than to lead her little sister into such mischief. However, there, don't cry so bitterly. You must not do it again."

"What will you do to us, Nursie dear? Nana says you will put us in bed."

"Well, if it was a wet day I should certainly put you in bed," said Nurse; "but I think it will be better to first change all your clothes and then send you out for a good race to get warm."

"Oh! thank you, Nurse dear," said Kitty, putting her arms round her.

"I'm afraid I'm a great deal too light upon you," said Nurse, kissing her; "but, mind, I count upon you that you never do such a thing again without asking my leave."

"Indeed I never will," said Kitty; and then they had all their clothes changed at once and went off to run about in the sun.

Running round a field as fast as they could they came upon a flock of ducks waddling along on their way to the very water in which Kitty and Rosie had been wading.

"Quack! quack!" said the ducks, and fluttered and cluttered about.

"Oh! Rosie, let us chase the ducks. They are going to paddle in the water, and it can't be good for them any more than us. A good run will be better for them!"

"Oh! yes, we'll chase them," cried Rosie, and off set the two little girls as fast as they could, all round the field, with the ducks flying and fluttering before them.

Round and round they went. The children clapped their hands and waved their arms and shouted at the fun, and they were quite sure the ducks were enjoying the play as much as themselves. The poor things darted to one side, and here and there, and the little girls flew after them and drove them along with the rest in front. After some time a few escaped and waddled away, quacking, towards the water, and in the end only three were left to keep up the chase for the children round and round the field.

In the midst of their high glee Kitty and Rosie suddenly saw one poor duck fall down, and lie struggling and gasping on the ground.

"It is only making fun," said Rosie; but Kitty went up to it and stooped over it.

"Oh! Rosie, it is dead," she cried in a miserable voice, and then burst out crying.

"What are you crying for, Kitty dear?" asked Rosie, looking from the dead duck to her sister, and from Kitty back to the duck.

"Because we've killed it with our play!" sobbed Kitty. "We didn't know we were being so cruel, but we've chased the poor duck to death!"

Rosie gazed at it sorrowfully. "Running didn't kill us," said she.

"Oh! no, I suppose because we are big. Dear, dear, what shall we do? I will go and tell Mrs. Dale."

Just at this moment they saw her come into the field.

"Oh! Mrs. Dale, we've chased a duck to death," cried Kitty, running up to her with streaming eyes; "and we thought the ducks were all having such fun with us, and some of them got away. But this one kept up the longest; and now he's dead."

Mrs. Dale looked very grave. She took the poor duck up in her hands and examined him. Yes, he was quite dead.

"Poor duckie will never run any more," she said. "My dears, you didn't know what you were doing, but always remember that it is a dreadful thing to make poor dumb animals suffer. You took away his breath and his little heart broke with fright. Let

it be a lesson to you, dear, to try and understand what animals can bear and what they can't bear. God made them as He made us, and He will not love us if we are cruel to them."

"Oh! I know, I know," sobbed Kitty. "I love animals, and I can't bear to hurt them."

That evening Kitty said her head ached, and she looked very pale, sitting on a stool and leaning her chin on her hand, while Rosie sat undressing her doll on the floor beside her.

"Oh! Rosie, this has been such a bad day," said Kitty. "I do hope to-morrow will do better."

"Wading in the river was very nice," said Rosie comfortably, "wasn't it, Kitty?"

"It wasn't nice in the end," said Kitty; "it was all wrong. And then we killed the duck. But you're such a fat baby, Rosie, you are never sorry for anything!"

Rosie's lip went down. Snubbed for her fat again. She felt, as usual, ashamed of herself for not being like Kitty. But her sweet little smiles soon came back, and she said cheerfully:

"Kitty, are you sorry for the duck because you are thin?"

But Kitty only shrugged her shoulders and turned away to pick up a story-book. Rosie was really too much of a baby to be talked to.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TIN WHISTLES.

"SAY, Bunko," said Jock, "wouldn't it be fun if we were to pretend to be a band coming round to play under the windows?"

"Oh! wouldn't it?" said Bunko; "but how could we do it, Jock? Nobody would believe we were a band. And we haven't got any instruments. And if we had we can't play them."

"You're a duffer," said Jock. "If you don't care for the fun I'll do it all by myself."

"You couldn't be a band all by yourself," said Bunko.

"Couldn't I!" said Jock. "People can do anything if they only make up their minds to it. I've learned that much. That's the way everything great gets done in the world."

And Jock set up his little nose as high in the air as possible and looked as if he was determined to be a Wellington or a William Tell.

Bunko was conquered. "I will be a band too," he said, "if you will give me something to play on."

"Of course I will!" said Jock. "I know what I am about. You might have been sure I would not ask you to be a band without giving you something to play."

"Where will you get instruments?"

"I'll tell you all about it. Sam has promised to buy me two tin whistles, fine long ones with plenty of holes; and anybody can play a tin whistle."

"Oh! yes," said Bunko, a little disappointed. He had been thinking of clarionets and violoncellos.

"Then Sam is to get us two of the men's jackets and hats to dress up in. We will pull the hats over our eyes and the people will never know us. They will come out and give us pennies, and won't it be fun?"

"Awful fun!" said Bunko. "What shall we do with the pennies?"

"Oh! I don't know," said Jock. "Save them up till we can think of something."

For two days the little boys could not

think of anything but this plot of theirs for having "awful fun."

Sam had secret meetings with them in a corner of the barn, and promised on his word of honour not to tell anyone what was going to happen. Jock walked about with his head very high, and the air of a man who has a great deal on his mind; and Bunko was always going off into sudden explosions of laughter about nothing, in a way that astonished Nurse.

Sam was as good as his word, and the two tin whistles and the two men's jackets and hats were left for the boys at the appointed hour in a dark nook in the barn. Just after the sun had set, when the twilight was creeping on, Jock and Bunko stole into the barn and found the treasures waiting for them.

"Oh! I say, Jock, this hat is far too big."

"Of course it will be too big," said Jock, "but who will notice that?"

"Oh! I say, look here! How can they help noticing this? And I should have no mouth to blow with!"

There stood Bunko with the hat down over his face, covering all his head down to his chin.

"You *are* such a little fellow, Bunko. I

never thought you were so small before. Let us see. Here, I will tie my handkerchief round your head, and that will fill you up a bit. There, that is a trifle better. Can you see?"

"I can just blink up a little," said Bunko; "but my mouth is out at any rate. Where's my jacket? Now I am all right.

"These hats are very strange ones," said Jock; "I think Sam must have gone to the biggest men in the place to borrow them. It wasn't fair of him."

Jock had put on his own hat, and felt himself swallowed up in it.

"Oh Jock! you look exactly like papa's umbrella when we hung his hat on the handle," cried Bunko.

"Do I?" said Jock, crestfallen. "Can you lend me your handkerchief, Bunko? I must tie it on, as I tied mine on you."

"Now, I think we will do," said Jock, having, like Bunko, got his mouth out of the hat. "You know the light is not very clear now, and they won't see anything wrong. Strolling-band boys are never very well dressed, I suppose."

"Not in the country, I believe," said Bunko. "In London the bands always wear good clothes."

"We'll pretend we left our good clothes in London, and brought these old ones into the country because of the dust."

"Yes indeed. People will easily understand that," said Bunko.

"We had better go now," said Jock, "before it gets too dark for them to see us."

"Where shall we go first?" said Bunko. "I think under Mrs. Dale's parlour window," said Jock. "She isn't so sharp as Nurse, and she won't know us so well."

Off they went, feeling very sheepish, though they would not acknowledge it to each other. However, they plucked up courage, and, not meeting anyone, they arrived at Mrs. Dale's window and stood there, and put their whistles to their mouths.

The first sounds that came were very faint indeed.

"Nobody will ever hear that," said Jock in an undertone. "Do make more noise, Bunko."

"I am making all the noise I can, Jock," whispered Bunko, and then he blew a shrill note, enough to set one's teeth on edge."

"That's better," said Jock. "Now let us blow loud together."

"What is that dreadful squeaking noise?" said Mrs. Dale to her dairymaid, with whom

she was going over accounts in the parlour.

"'Tain't none of the animals, ma'am," said the dairymaid. "It's too near for the pigs."

"Just look out of the window and see," said Mrs. Dale.

"Oh goodness!" said the dairymaid, "if it ain't two little strange figures as ever I see playing on whistles!"

Mrs. Dale left her seat at the table and came to the window.

"Poor little chaps!" she said, "I suppose they belong to tramps."

"Same tramps as stole Mrs. Green's children's shoes and stockings," said the dairymaid. "I'll go and hunt 'em away."

"No, Susan, have patience a little. Perhaps the poor children are hungry. Oh, my ears! Did you ever hear such squeaking?"

Mrs. Dale threw open the window, and the boys drew back for fear of being recognized.

"What do you want, my lads?" said Mrs. Dale.

"Penny, ma'am. Hungry, ma'am," said Jock, not venturing to say many words.

"Well, here is a penny. You ought to

be at home in your beds. Where do you live, and have you a mother?"

"London, ma'am. Mother's in London, ma'am."

At this Bunko nearly exploded with laughter, but Jock nudged him.

"Don't be unkind to your little brother," said Mrs. Dale. "I daresay he's tired to death. Dear, dear, Susan! to think of a mother sending her children tramping the roads from London with nothing but tin whistles to depend on for their daily bread!"

"Oh, ma'am! you're too soft," said Susan. "Don't be too quick to believe the likes of 'em."

"Are you hungry, my boys? Would you like some supper?" asked Mrs. Dale.

"Don't bring them in here!" cried Susan. "As likely as not they belong to thieves."

"Throw us a bit of bread, ma'am," cried Jock.

Mrs. Dale, longing to bring them into the house, but afraid of Susan, and of her husband, who would be in presently, went to a cupboard and threw them half a loaf out of the window. Jack caught it and took a great bite out of it, and then gave a bite to Bunko.

"Poor children! They have no more

manners than a pair of little wolves. Poor neglected children!" said Mrs. Dale sorrowfully.

"Oh! ma'am, there's more than manners astray with them," said Susan. "I knows the sort of 'em. Not a bit hungry, I'll swear, for all their bites."

"Where are you going to sleep to-night, my boys?" asked Mrs. Dale at the window.

"Somewheres about here," said Jock, and again Bunko nearly exploded with laughter.

"There, now," said Susan; "here's a nice thing to be thinking about in our beds. They belong to a nest of tramps, ma'am, as is harbouring and hankering about this place."

Just as she spoke the parlour door opened and Nurse Green came in.

"Oh, Mrs. Dale!" she said, "I am so uneasy; my two boys have never come home this evening."

"Don't be uneasy, Mrs. Green," said Mrs. Dale; "Farmer has them, I'll be bound. He hasn't come home neither, hasn't Mr. Dale, to-night."

Jock and Bunko had heard Nurse's voice through the widow, and slipped away round to the other side of the house, where they

stood still again, and began playing their whistles under the nursery window.

Kitty and Rosie were at the window in their night-gowns in a moment.

"Oh, Nana! do come here and look. Here are two such queer-looking boys, such little boys in big clothes playing whistles just below!"

"It isn't nice music," said Rosie.

"Oh my! what screeching!" said Nana.

"Well, poor fellows! I suppose they never learned any better," said Kitty. "They're doing it for pennies; and perhaps they have nowhere to go. What will they do when it gets quite dark?"

"Squeak, squeak, squeak!" went the two tin whistles, and Nana opened the window to send the boys away.

"Here's a penny, boys, and run away with you. Boys like you ought to be in bed."

The boys caught the pennies and shook their heads. They were afraid to speak here lest they should be known at once

In the meantime Farmer Dale had come home and entered the parlour where Nurse and Mrs. Dale and Susan were talking about Jock and Bunko. When they saw Mr. Dale come in without them Nurse uttered a cry of anxiety.

"Oh! Mr. Dale, haven't you got my boys? My last hope has been that they were with you."

"Haven't seen them since the afternoon," said Mr. Dale, looking very grave. "Don't mean to say they're lost?"

Nurse wrung her hands. "Where ought we to go to look for them?" she said. "I haven't seen them for an hour. Last I saw of them they were playing under the trees before the house."

"Perhaps those two little tramps might have seen them," said Susan. "O gracious! they're gone."

"Tramps?" said Mr. Dale. "Are there tramps about?"

"Children's shoes and stockings were stolen the other day," said Susan, "and this evening comes two rascally-looking little boys playing screechy tin whistles for pennies right up to the window. There's a nest of them somewheres in the neighbourhood, or I'm not a Christian girl!"

"Maybe you're not, Susan," said Mrs. Dale severely, "for you were as hard as flints on them poor little harmless lads."

"I don't like to hear of tramps, however," said Farmer Dale.

"Oh, Mr. Dale!" cried Nurse, "don't

say they have stolen my boys! Oh! what will become of me, and what shall I say to their mother?"

"Don't take on, Mrs. Green, till we see a little further," said Farmer Dale. "I will go round and look for the penny whistlers, and see if anything is to be got from them."

The farmer went out of doors, and the women followed him. As soon as they turned the corner of the gable they all heard the tin whistles screeching and squealing away.

"They're not gone, anyhow," said Susan, darting forward.

"Here, you young rascals," she cried; "come here and speak to the master."

As soon as Jock and Bunko heard this, and saw the farmer and Mrs. Dale and Nurse all coming up to them, they turned on their heels and flew as fast as they could away across the grass and among the trees. They had not intended to be caught like this, but meant to have left the hats and coats in the barn when they had had enough fun, and to have come in quietly and heard all about the travelling band. So now they ran their best to get away and hide; but Farmer Dale rushed after them.

"There!" cried Susan, "I knew they

were at the bottom of it. You'll see if they don't belong to the tramps that has stole your boys, Mrs. Green."

Nurse Green groaned a heavy groan, and cast up her eyes as she thought of the wickedness of the world.

Meantime, as Jock and Bunko fled, they found the farmer overtaking them, and trying to make more speed they dashed against one another and both rolled over on the grass. The hats that were so large flew off their heads and trundled away, and there lay the boys kicking up their heels and laughing wildly.

The farmer gave a loud shout, and all the women came running to see what was the matter.

"Susan was right," roared the farmer. "Sure enough they be the tramps that knows all about your boys, Mrs. Green. It's your boys, as usual, that has been making old fools of us all!"

"Why, it's never Jock and Bunko themselves!" cried Nurse, coming up. "Oh! you dreadful boys, I've always said you would be the death of me yet some day;" and Nurse sat down on the trunk of a tree and looked ready to cry.

"It's all right, Nurse, and we've had a

jolly bit of fun!" cried Jock. "There, there! don't faint!" and he began to fan her furiously with the end of her own mantle.

Of course Nurse Green gave Jock and Bunko a good lecture before they went to bed that night; but all the same there was great fun over the whole story next morning in the nursery, and Kitty was never tired hearing about how they managed it all, and admiring Sam's kindness in lending them the coats and hats.

CHAPTER XIII.

KITTY WASHES AND IRONS HER PINAFORE.

OPPIE and Bet had now got holidays at their school and were at home all day, so that they were able to have many a merry game with Kitty and Rosie. They were also very useful to their mother, and Kitty was much surprised to see how many clever things Poppie, who was the eldest, could do about the house.

She could broil a chop as nicely as any cook, could make bread and puddings with only a little help, and knew how to wash and iron her own pinafores. Kitty looked on with astonishment and admiration as her little friend cleverly performed these wonders.

"But you know I am bigger than you," said Poppie. "I am two years older, and ever so much taller and stronger of my age."

"Yes," said Kitty, "I am small and thin." It was the first time she had thought of her thinness as a misfortune.

"Still you might learn to do a great deal," said Poppie. "I had to begin younger than you."

"But there's Nurse, who wouldn't hear of it," said Kitty. "You've no idea. She won't even let me dress myself. And then at home in our house there is somebody to do everything. I don't get the least chance of being useful."

Poppie laughed. "If I were a little lady, I should think it great fun to have people waiting on me."

"No, you wouldn't," said Kitty. "It isn't nice at all. I am sure it is far better fun to have to do things yourself."

"Well, I think mother would teach you some things; and perhaps Mrs. Green would give you leave to learn."

"I will ask, I will ask!" cried Kitty clapping her hands above her head in glee; and away she went to look for Mrs. Dale, who was picking peas in the garden. At first Kitty could not find her.

"Mrs. Dale, Mrs. Dale!" cried Kitty. "I want you so much. Oh! Mrs. Dale."

Mrs. Dale was sitting in between the

long rows of green peas, with a round open basket on her knees half-filled with pea-pods, and a large white sun-bonnet on her head, protecting it from the sun.

"I'm here, my dear, I'm here!" she called in answer to Kitty's impatient summons. "What do you want with me?"

"Oh! Mrs. Dale, I want you to teach me to wash and cook like Poppie."

"But, my dear, Poppie is a farmer's child who will have to work always to help her parents. You most likely will not want to cook and iron, but will have other things to do."

"No matter, Mrs. Dale. It can't be any harm to learn to do things, can it? And, oh! it would be so nice. You can't think how I long to wash."

Mrs. Dale laughed. "Well, we will see about it," she said. "I can't say I think you are wrong this time, and work is better than mischief any day. What would you think of beginning by helping me to shell these peas?"

"Oh! I should like it of all things," said Kitty. "Will you really let me do it?"

"Gladly, my child. I don't think Nurse will object to such clean work as that."

Kitty was set up in a sunny window of

the nice clean kitchen, with a large white apron tied under her chin and round her waist, and with two dishes before her, one containing the unshelled peas, and the other to hold the peas that came out of their shells. She did her task so nicely, that Mrs. Dale was greatly pleased, and promised to give her other bits of work to do.

To wash and iron something was the most earnest desire of Kitty's heart; and the next morning she wakened quite early, about five o'clock, and heard Mrs. Dale go down-stairs past the door of the room she slept in. Up got Kitty and dressed herself as well as she could. She was not in the habit of doing this, and she did not find it quite easy. She put on her stockings with the heels to the front, where they stood up in little bags on her instep; however, she buttoned her shoes over them and thought they would do.

"It is no matter at all," she thought, "if I can only walk down-stairs in them."

Then she had to put on her petticoat the wrong way and fasten it up the front, because her little hands could not manage to tie the strings behind. "But nobody will see that," said Kitty to herself, "when my frock is put over it."

The frock had to be fastened behind, but Kitty thought Mrs. Dale would stand her friend in this difficulty; and so having said her prayers, she seized a soiled white pinafore which she had worn the day before, and armed with it, tripped down-stairs as softly and as quickly as she could.

"Oh! dear Mrs. Dale," she said, running into the kitchen, "will you be so kind as to fasten my frock up the back? I sha'n't be able to do anything while it keeps flapping open!"

Mrs. Dale looked in astonishment at the rather wild little figure, and then laughed heartily. In a few minutes she put poor Kitty to rights and made her look as neat as usual.

"And now, my dear, will you tell me what has brought you out of your bed at this hour? Even Poppie will not be up for another hour."

"Oh! Mrs. Dale, I want to wash. You know you said you would see about it. And when my mamma at home says she will see about it we always know she is going to do it for us. And you are just the same. You said 'perhaps,' and your perhapses always come true."

"I never did see such a child to coax,"

said Mrs. Dale; "but what will Mrs. Green say?"

"Oh! Nurse is always pleased enough when things are *well over*," said Kitty. "When she sees that I have washed my pinafore and am quite clean after it, and not sloppy, she will be as pleased, as pleased. You'll see, Mrs. Dale, if you let me try."

"Well, my dear, I'll take the chance, not to vex your little heart. If more little ladies learned to be useful, I don't say but it would be a very good thing."

"I've brought a pinafore, Mrs. Dale, and you see all I want is some water and soap."

The end of it was that Mrs. Dale took her out into the wash-house, where all was nice and orderly, and set her to work. First she placed a large brown earthenware pan on a broad bench and half-filled it with warm water. Then she placed Kitty standing on a low stool at the pan, all tied up in a huge kitchen apron of strong material, and gave her a piece of soap not too large for her mites of hands. Plop went the pinafore into the water, and Kitty's cup of happiness was full.

Mrs. Dale showed her how to rub the soap on the pinafore, and then to rub the pinafore till it grew by degrees whiter and

whiter. Mrs. Dale gave it a few strong rubs with her own hands, which Kitty did not quite like, as she was greatly afraid it would get clean too soon, and that her joy would come to an end.

"That will do, Mrs. Dale, thank you," said Kitty. "I know quite well all about it now. *Do* just go away, Mrs. Dale, for a while, and you shall see how white I will make it."

Then Kitty worked away all by herself, and she thought that no play she ever made was half so delightful as this washing.

"When I am grown up," she thought, "I will ask papa and mamma to let me be a washerwoman."

When Mrs. Dale saw that the pinafore was looking pretty white, she fetched some fresh water, in which it got a second washing.

"Oh! it is as white as snow Mrs. Dale," cried Kitty. "What must I do with it now?"

Mrs. Dale then brought a pan with a little starch and blue in the water, and in this Kitty rinsed the pinafore nicely. And then, after passing through some clear water once again, the pinafore was wrung out carefully and slightly dried, while a

small smoothing-iron was getting heated in the fire.

"Now, Kitty, you have done this very well," said Mrs. Dale, "and have not splashed much; but I must tell you I am much more afraid of the iron for you than of the soap and water."

"Oh! Mrs. Dale, I will be so careful!"

Mrs. Dale then placed her kneeling on a chair at the ironing-table, on which she spread first a blanket, and afterwards a snow-white cloth. Next came the pinafore, and was stretched, just a little damp, quite flat on the white cloth. And last of all came the hot iron, with a little iron-stand to hold it. The handle of the iron was all rolled up in cloths to keep it from feeling too hot to the hand.

Kitty's eyes glowed with eagerness, but she was as grave and quiet as possible. She knew that this ironing was a much more serious business than the washing.

After running the iron all over the pinafore once, Mrs. Dale allowed Kitty to take it in her own hand, and to try and do with it what she had done. Mrs. Dale would not leave her now, but stood by watching to see that nothing was burnt.

"Don't let it stand on any one spot," said

Mrs. Dale, "keep running it all over as I did."

Kitty took great pains to do as she was bid, and as the pinafore got drier and drier, the ironing got easier. At last it was quite done, and the pinafore looked wonderfully well.

"And you didn't do much of it, now did you, Mrs. Dale? Oh! Nurse will never believe it."

"She will get a great surprise, I am sure," said Mrs. Dale. "Now we will hang the pinafore on a rail before the fire to air, and you shall have some breakfast with me in my parlour. My tea is just made, and I have got some honey for you."

Kitty jumped up and hugged Mrs. Dale, who then took off the huge apron, and there was Kitty as tidy as if nothing had happened.

They then went into the parlour, where the windows were open and the flowers all looking in; and Kitty had a large cup of milk with a little tea in it, and a great deal of cream, and a large piece of scone with honey on it.

"Oh! it has been such a good morning, dear Mrs. Dale," said Kitty with sparkling eyes. "And oh! I want you to promise

me something in a great, great secret. When I am a real grown-up washerwoman I mean to come and live here in a cottage. And you will give me all your washing, won't you, Mrs. Dale?"

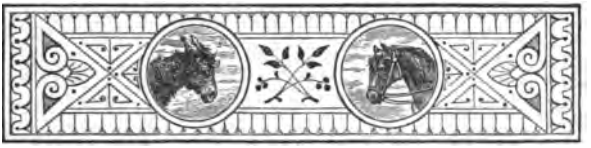
Mrs. Dale laughed till the tears came into her eyes. "That I will, my dear, as soon as you are ready to take it," she said heartily. And now run upstairs with your pinafore, for Nurse will get a fright if she finds your bed empty, and does not know where you have gone."

Off flew Kitty, and burst into the nursery.

"Look at my pinafore! Look at my pinafore!" she cried, shaking it at Nurse Green. "It's the very one I wore last evening, and you said I had got it in a mess. I washed it and ironed it myself this morning."

"The child is gone out of her mind," said Nurse.

"I knew you would say something like that," said Kitty; "but Mrs. Dale is going to tell you all about it."



CHAPTER XIV.

THE LITTLE RIDING GIRL.

ONE fine evening news spread all about the farm that a travelling company of circus people were on their way to the place, and that they would stop for a day between the village and Mrs. Dale's house. Young and old were greatly excited at the news, and there was a good deal of talk as to what sort of wonders these strolling performers could do.

The Hazel children could speak of nothing else, and plagued Nurse from morning till night to give them a promise that when the circus people arrived she would take them to see the fun.

"I can't promise anything about it, children," she said, "until I know what sort of people they are. I don't think much of such creatures myself, and I am not at all sure about encouraging them."

"Papa took me to a circus once himself," said Jock, "and he wouldn't have done it if there had been any harm. The horses rode most splendidly, and it was a fine thing to see."

"Your papa can do what he likes, and of course he took you to the best place of the kind. These things are different in London. But if the people come I shall ask Mr. Dale's advice."

The people came on the very next day, and pitched a large tent on a common about half a mile from Mr. Dale's house. They had a few circus horses and riders with them, and some men who tumbled on the grass, and balanced themselves on ropes and sticks, and did all sorts of things of that kind. A great number of people came to see them from the village, and from all the cottages and farms about; and they were to give two performances, one in the morning after they arrived, and one in the evening.

Jock and Kitty and Bunko went to Mr. Dale and implored him to ask Nurse to take them to see the fun; and Mr. Dale promised to see what could be done. He went to Nurse Green and told her what he thought about the matter.

"They've been here before," he said, "and I never saw any harm with them, poor souls! It's their way of struggling for a bit to eat; and they do make quite a pretty show sometimes. If you think you can take these three eldest of yours to give them a treat, I will go with you myself and see that there's nothing amiss."

This speech and three pairs of arms hugging her round the neck overcame Nurse Green, and she consented to go and see the show.

The children could hardly sleep for excitement, and early in the morning were up and hurrying Nurse and Nana to get the breakfast over. By ten o'clock Nurse, and Kitty, and Jock, and Bunko set off with Mr. Dale for the circus tent.

Well, I suppose you all know what a circus is; how the horses fly round and a man in gold spangles rides on them all, and somebody flies through a hoop, and men tumble about and say things that make everybody laugh. This was not a grand circus, but out in the fields there it seemed the prettiest performance in the world. When it was about half over, and the children were in the height of their glee, the most beautiful part of the show began.

A little girl came out, not much bigger than Kitty, and with slender limbs like hers, and a small, pale, pretty face, and she was dressed in short white skirts all spangled with gold.

This nice little girl had to ride a horse round and round the tent, and to jump up from her seat while the horse was going and the music playing, and to stand on one leg and point her toe and balance a stick in her hands.

"Oh, look, Nurse!" said Kitty, "that is just the way I stood when I was a fairy. But she does it ever so much better. I waggled even with the steady bank under me; but she does not waggle even when the horse is flying."

"Oh! I say, isn't she pretty?" cried Jock. "I never saw such a clever little girl."

"I hope she won't fall," said Bunko; "I can ride the donkey, but I couldn't keep capering about on his back like that."

"She's been well taught, you see," said Farmer Dale. "I'm afraid she got many a whipping, poor child, before she was able to do like that."

"Oh! but she's smiling as if she liked it," said Jock. "I think she must have been born able to do it."

"Now they are bringing out a hoop," said Kitty. "You will see how she will fly through the hoop."

The hoop was held before her, the horse kept galloping round, and the pretty little girl smiled and leaped through the hoop. The children clapped their hands wildly, and Jock and Bunko cheered, and as they were quite in front the little girl saw them and smiled back at them. Round and round she went again, and once more she flew through the hoop; and again the Hazel children clapped and shouted with delight.

How it happened, nobody ever could tell; but the sad part of my story has now to begin. A third time the hoop was held before the little girl and she sprang through it; but before she got clear of it, somehow she drooped her foot, her toe caught, the horse passed from beneath her, and she fell on her back on the ground.

A shout burst from every man in the place, and the children began to cry; for the poor little girl lay there quite still, and everyone thought she was killed. The man who had been holding the hoop for her lifted her in his arms, and then she

gave a piercing scream. Her back was terribly hurt, and she could not bear the pain of being touched. She was carried away screaming, and the performance came suddenly to an end.

The Hazel children were quite pale, and Kitty was sobbing.

"Oh, Nurse, we *can't* go home till we hear some more about her!" she cried. "You couldn't ask us to do it."

"Indeed, my dear, I feel very anxious about her myself, but I don't see what good we can do."

Farmer Dale had sent some one off for the doctor who lived near the village, and he and Nurse now went round to the smaller tent where the strolling players were living. One of the circus riders came out and spoke to them.

"I'm afraid it's a bad business," he said; "it's what often happens to children that are put to our trade. One slip, and it's all over with them."

"Do you think she will die?" asked the farmer.

"No; and maybe that's the worst of it," said the man, dashing a tear out of his eye. "She'll live to be a cripple and a beggar maybe."

"Has she anyone belonging to her in your company?" asked the farmer.

"Oh, yes! her mother is with her. She may go where she likes with her now. It's only the child that was useful to us."

The doctor now arrived, and said that the little girl's spine was injured, and that it would be many a day before she could stand straight again.

The children went sorrowfully home with Nurse, and all that day they were watching for news of the poor little girl who had been so terribly hurt while amusing them so delightfully with her cleverness. Farmer Dale promised to send a messenger in the evening to know how she was getting on, but the children were in bed before the messenger came back.

The next morning they were told that the whole company of the circus people had gone on their way that morning early, and that the little girl and her mother were in a cottage not far away. As soon as breakfast was over, Nurse took Kitty and Jock by the hand and set out to pay a visit to the unhappy mother.

They found the poor mother bent in two with grief, and moaning to herself as she sat by her child's bedside.

"Oh, my darling!" she cried, weeping bitterly, "why did I give you to the players? They told me your fortune would be made; and now your poor back is broken, and we are both of us helpless on the world!"

Nurse began to cry herself when she heard this sorrowful wail; and she tried to comfort the poor woman.

"Perhaps it will not be so bad as you think," she said. "Here in the good country air she may get over it. And then you are still young yourself, and can get something to do.

"Nobody knows anything about me here," said the poor woman. "My name is Burns. I was once a respectable servant, but I married in haste, and my husband belonged to the circus. I met him when they came round the country and stopped close to my master's house. When he died of catching a cold after riding, the others persuaded me to let the child be trained. She was so pretty, and so slight and supple. And now they have ruined her, to my sorrow!"

Nurse Green asked her if she had any money, and questioned her about what she could do. Mrs. Burns had a few shillings and that was all. She used to be able to

wash and cook, but she feared she had forgotten everything of the kind.

Nurse gave her some money, and promised to talk to Mr. Dale about her.

Kitty begged to be allowed to see little Jenny Burns. They had called her "Estelle" in the playbills; but she was really little Jenny Burns.

Poor little Jenny was lying patiently with a look of great pain on her pale face. Kitty came to her bedside and leaned over and kissed her. Then poor Jenny smiled.

"You are the little girl who was laughing so much and clapping hands," said Jenny; "I liked you ever so, and now I like you far better."

"Oh, Jenny dear!" said Kitty, "I am so dreadfully sorry you are hurt. You did jump so beautifully. I wish you would get well."

"I wish I could," said Jenny. "I think if we stay here I might. I don't want to ride any more. I would rather pick flowers in the fields."

"Perhaps you can," said Kitty. "I will ask Farmer Dale to see about it. He is a very kind man, and so big and strong! I think he could do anything he liked about here, and I will ask him to get you a cottage."

"Oh, thank you!" said Jenny, "but I don't know when we could find money to pay for it. Mother used to get money for my riding, but now I don't know where she will get any."

This was a point Kitty could not settle, but she felt quite sure money could be got from somewhere.

That evening there was a great deal of talking at the farm about poor Mrs. Burns and her little girl Jenny who had got so badly hurt.

"I've been to see the doctor," said the farmer, "and he says little Jenny may live to get all right if she is well taken care of, and gets leave to lie quiet in a healthy place, with proper food and plenty of fresh air."

"I have been talking to the mother," said Nurse Green, "and she was once a servant in a respectable family, and I daresay she could do something hereabouts to earn her bread if some few kind people would but take an interest in her."

"Couldn't she do washing?" cried Kitty, remembering her pinafore.

"Not a bad idea at all," said Mrs. Dale. "If she should happen to be a good washer, and industrious, I don't say but what she might get on."

"There's that little empty cottage at the end of the village," said the farmer. "If she's a thrifty woman she might take that, and dry her clothes in the garden behind it. 'Tain't no more than two rooms, but 'twould be big enough for her and Jenny."

"Oh! Mr. Dale, *will* you see about it?" cried Kitty. "I know that cottage. It has a large rose-bush right in front. I'm sure Jenny would get well in there. And Mrs. Burns couldn't do anything nicer than washing."

Mrs. Dale smiled at Kitty's earnestness.

"I quite agree with you, my dear," he said, "but we must think about the rent. The first year's rent would come hard upon her, maybe before she was rightly settled to her work."

"How much would the rent be?" asked Kitty.

"Well, I think that little cottage might be got for five pounds a year. It's the smallest anywhere about."

"Five pounds!" repeated Kitty. "Oh! Mr. Dale, my godfather gave me seven pounds on my last birthday, and he said it was to buy me a watch. Mamma said I was too small for a watch, and she is keeping the money till I am old enough to

know what to do with it. I'm old enough now, am I not, because I've found something out. Will you take the money for Mrs. Burns?"

"Why, you are a kind little girl," said Mr. Dale, stroking Kitty's hair. "Just think a bit, my dear! Think of all the beautiful dolls and boxes of toys you could buy yourself with that money. And besides, a watch is a very nice thing to have."

"Oh! Mr. Dale, as if any of those things could matter as much as Jenny!"

"Well, if you put it that way, I don't think they do myself. But it's all in the way people look at it. As you've that sort of a soft heart that feels for others, my child, I will say that you couldn't get your money's worth of pleasure in a more satisfactory way."

"But what will mamma say?" said Nurse, who was looking quite proud of Kitty.

"Oh! I think she won't object," said Kitty. "Mamma likes giving money to help people."

Jock had now joined the talkers, and said,

"There are seven pounds, you know, Kitty, and if Mr. Dale would take the five to pay the rent, the other two would do to buy furniture and things."

"So they would," said Kitty; "but I never thought of the furniture. Perhaps two pounds would not be enough."

"Well, then, papa has a pound of mine, and I would rather give it to mend up Jenny than for anything else in the world."

"I have half a sovereign at home," cried Bunko, "and I will give it to buy Mrs. Burns a washing-tub."

"Well done, Bunko!" said the farmer laughing. "That is going straight to the point."

It was agreed by everyone that the children should write to their father and mother that evening about the money they wished to expend on helping Jenny's mother to set up in a good way of life; and after tea they all three sat round the table in the nursery with paper before them, and pens and ink in their hands.

Kitty's letter was this:

"My dear Mother,

"You know I have seven pounds, and I want them to buy a cottage for Jenny's mother, because Jenny's back is nearly broken, off the horse, and the circus has left them behind. There will be washing-tubs and things, and I want all my

money. Please do, darling mother, for Jenny is far nicer than a watch.

"Your fond little girl,
"KITTY."

Jock wrote to his papa:

"Dear Father,

"If you saw Jenny you would know how badly I want my Pound. She was riding so butyfully, and when we were laughing her back was broken.

"Your affectionate son,
"JOCK."

Bunko's letter was the shortest of the three.

"My dear Papa,

"Please buy me a large washing-tub with my haff sovran, and send it to me by post.

"Your affectonate sun,
"BUNKO."

On reading these three letters Nurse thought she had better write herself to Mrs. Hazel and explain what had happened. That evening when the children were all in bed Nurse Green and Mrs. Dale walked

to the village to post all the letters, and called on the way to see Mrs. Burns.

Mrs. Dale told her that she thought she might get washing to do in the country if she was able for it, and asked her questions about what she could do."

"God bless you all for your kindness!" said Mrs. Burns. "I used to be a right good washer. Indeed I was laundry-maid in a gentleman's family, and oh! I was a happy girl then without a care."

"And you think you could undertake to do washing now?"

"Certainly I could, if I could get it to do. But who would give me their things? And where could I wash them?

"You would have to take a cottage, of course," said Mrs. Dale. "My husband has been thinking you might manage it. There's a small one to let; and I will do my best to get you into work."

"I am very very thankful to you," said poor Mrs. Burns, beginning to cry. "I couldn't think of anything happier than what you say. But oh! if it had only come to me before my darling's back was broken!"

"Come, now," said Mrs. Dale, "the doctor says it ain't just to say broken. It's

got a kind of twist, but it'll maybe get right again."

"God grant it!" sobbed poor Mrs. Burns.

"And then you see you will have fresh air for her, and bits of flowers to cheer her up, and peace and quietness. I wouldn't like to see you take her off to a big town, Mrs. Burns; not to be crowded up in a nasty street."

Mrs. Dale then asked her would she like to see the cottage that was vacant, and Mrs. Burns said she would like it very much.

"Only," she said, "what is the use of my setting my heart on it, for maybe I couldn't pay the rent?"

Nurse Green then offered to stay by Jenny while Mrs. Dale and Mrs. Burns went to look at the cottage.

Mrs. Burns was quite delighted with it. There was a little green paling all round it, and the great rose-bush was in flower, covered with those large snow-white roses with pink hearts, which have such a delicious perfume, and which grow almost wild in country gardens. The walls were made of red brick and gray stones, and inside it was white-washed and as clean as could be.

"It is very small, you see," said Mrs. Dale, "and that is why it can be had cheap.

With two little neat rooms you could get on nicely."

"Oh! why do you put it in my head?" said Mrs. Burns, bursting out crying afresh. "I have no furniture and no money, and who would give me trust in a strange place?"

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. BURNS AT HOME.

THE next evening the Hazel children got a great surprise, for, instead of an answer to their letters, their dear mamma walked into the farmhouse herself.

Screams of delight were heard from the nursery as they all came jumping round her.

"How rosy and well my darlings look!" she said, as she gathered them all into her arms at once. "I think Mrs. Dale must have a secret for fattening children."

After she had kissed them each about a dozen times, she told them why she had come to give them a surprise.

"I thought I might as well come myself and see about all these cottages and washing-tubs," she said laughing.

"And have you brought our money?" cried the children.

"Yes, I have brought it. And now tell me all about poor little Jenny."

The children all began to talk at once, and their mother had to put her hand over her ears because they made such a noise.

"Such a dear little girl!" cried Kitty.

"So pretty!" cried Jock.

"She rode so splendidly," said Bunko.

"Poor little Jenny got a fall!" said Rosie; and even Ba kept shouting, "Jenny fall! Jenny hurt!"

"Well, I am going to see this cottage," said Mrs. Hazel, after she had had some talk with Nurse and Mrs. Dale.

"And Jenny, mamma?" "And Jenny?" cried the children.

"Certainly, Jenny, and her mother too. And Nurse, will you ask them to bring up my portmanteau?"

The portmanteau was brought up and opened, and there was a quantity of nice clothing for both Jenny and Mrs. Burns, one or two pretty frocks of Kitty's which her mother thought she could do without, as well as petticoats, stockings, and shoes, and many other articles.

"Oh! mamma, mamma, you are lovely!"

cried Kitty, springing into her mother's arms. "Poor little Jenny has such bad clothes, and Mrs. Burns is dreadfully poor."

Kitty, Jock, and Bunko then were dressed to go out walking with their mother, while Rosie and Ba stayed with Nurse at home. Mrs. Hazel had some talk with Mrs. Dale first, and then she went to see about the cottage. Before she returned she had engaged the cottage for Mrs. Burns, and paid the first year's rent in advance.

The next day a chaise was hired for Mrs. Hazel by Mr. Dale, and the farmer himself drove her and the children to D——, a town five miles away, where they bought some simple furniture such as poor Mrs. Burns required. Great was the children's joy as they helped at the buying, and thought that their money was spent on giving Jenny a home.

Then the next pleasure was the receiving of the furniture when it arrived from D——, and the arranging of it in Mrs. Burns' new cottage. When everything was in its place and looking quite nice, they all went to tell Mrs. Burns what had been done.

Mrs. Burns was sitting as usual beside Jenny's bed, and her eyes were red with crying.

"Mrs. Burns, here is mamma come to see you," said Kitty, putting her bright little face in at the door of the room.

"I hope your little girl is better, Mrs. Burns," said Mrs. Hazel. "My children have told me all about your trouble, and I thought I should like to see you."

"Oh! madam, you are very good. These dear children have been so kind to me and Jenny. I'm very glad to see you I'm sure, madam."

Then Mrs. Hazel spoke to Jenny and kissed her, and gave her a pretty story-book full of pictures, which she had brought with her from London.

"And now, Mrs. Burns," said Mrs. Hazel gently and kindly, "you must allow my children to make you a little present in return for the pleasure your little daughter gave them when she was well, and also for the good example she gives them by her patient suffering. There is a little cottage in the village—"

"Yes, madam," said Mrs. Burns, who had turned quite pale.

"The children have taken it for you for a year, and you will find some things in it that you will want. I hope you will move into it as soon as you can."

Poor Mrs. Burns was quite speechless with surprise, and scarcely knew what to do to show her delight.

"Providence has sent you to me like an angel, madam," she said, and her tears began to flow once more.

"You must thank God, then, and not me," said Mrs. Hazel. "We all need help in this world sometimes, and I for one am grateful to Him for enabling me to do a kindness to one who is a mother like myself."

When they looked at Jenny she was crying too in her bed, and Kitty went to her and kissed her.

"You shall stay in this lovely place, Jenny," she said, "and have a little bed of your own to be on. But I hope you won't have to lie long. Oh! I want so much to see you in your new cottage. When will the doctor allow you to move?"

When the doctor was asked, he said Jenny might be moved, lying flat on cushions in a cart, and Farmer Dale came for her himself, and drove her slowly to her new home. Then he carried her in and placed her on her nice little bed.

Mrs. Dale and Kitty were there before the mother and daughter arrived, and had

tea made for them in their own little cottage.

It was a nice little home indeed. Mrs. Dale had put white curtains across the windows, and a bowl of the sweet white roses off the bush outside right in the middle of the small tea-table. In a little mite of a scullery behind stood Bunko's washing-tubs (more than one) in all their glory.

"Well, I'm sure," said Mrs. Dale, "if this isn't better than riding about the world in a circus show, my name isn't Anna Dale!"

"Oh, Mrs. Dale!" said Kitty, looking round with sparkling eyes, "if you knew how I envy Mrs. Burns!"

"Envy her, my dear?"

"Oh! yes, Mrs. Dale. Just think of how lovely it must be to be a washerwoman!"

"Much you know about that!" said Mrs. Dale.

"Oh! but I do. You know I washed my pinafore."

"So you did indeed. I wonder how you would like to wash a hundred of them?"

"I should *love* it," said Kitty, "only I am afraid mamma wouldn't like it."

When Jenny was carried into the little

bed-room, and saw it looking so bright, and all the nice frocks and things hanging on the wall, she was so pleased that she almost forget her pain. Her mother arranged her comfortably on her bed, and then came into the little kitchen, and as usual, began to cry.

"Oh! *do* stop crying, Mrs. Burns," implored Kitty. "Are you *really* sorry to come here?"

"Sorry!" cried Mrs. Burns. "No, my dear, my heart is glad. But there's tears for joy as well as grief."

"How very odd!" said Kitty. "When I am glad I always want to laugh and jump about."

Mrs. Dale then explained to Mrs. Burns that several ladies in the country round about who were in the habit of sending to the farm for their butter and eggs had promised her to give their washing to the mother of the little girl who had been hurt. With all these good things coming upon her at once, Mrs. Burns began to feel that she really must cheer up, or people would think she was ungrateful. So she laughed and looked happy.

"Oh! mother," cried Jenny, who could see her through the open door from where

she lay, "if you smile and laugh like that I shall soon get well."

"You hear that?" said Mrs. Dale. "Now, Mrs. Burns, if you do not laugh and be merry to cure your child I shall say you are a bad mother."

Soon after that the washing business began, and every day the Hazel children came to the cottage to see Mrs. Burns and Jenny. Bunko thought it delightful to see Mrs. Burns with her arms up to the elbows in soap suds as she bent busily over *his* tubs in her clean little wash-house, and Kitty was never tired dressing and undressing dolls for Jenny, or reading stories aloud for her amusement.

Jenny was as fond of flowers as Kitty was, and Kitty brought her large nosegays out of the fields, and sometimes a few blossoms from Mrs. Dale's garden. Mr. Dale sent a basket of fruit now and then, which Jock carried, and it was a great treat to get leave to come with Mrs. Dale to the cottage when she brought a boiled chicken or a nice bit of jelly for the poor little invalid girl. Altogether the Burns's mother and daughter were soon getting on quite comfortably, and the doctor gave strong hope of Jenny's recovery.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

MRS. HAZEL had only stayed a few days at the farm, but she allowed the children to remain there some time longer. Now that they had Jenny to take care of, the little Hazels had not so much time as before for plays and mischief, for they were as busy as bees, and, besides, were a great deal happier than they had been when only thinking of amusing themselves.

At last a day came when they had all to pack up and get ready to return to London. Of course they were very glad to go back to their home and their dear father and mother; but in spite of that they were sorry to leave the farm, and Mr. and Mrs. Dale, and Mrs. Burns and Jenny.

Mrs. Hazel wrote to Mrs. Dale, thanking her for her kindness to the children,

and saying that she hoped to send them to her every summer for the future, at least whenever Mrs. Dale could take them in.

This news was a great pleasure to them all, especially to Jenny, who said she should look forward all through the winter to the return of her little friends in the spring. Mrs. Dale promised to write to Nurse Green sometimes and tell her all that was happening in that part of the country. All the toys that the children had brought with them from London were left behind with Jenny, and a good many story-books besides.

And this is all I have to tell you about my Four Little Mischiefs just at present. Some day, perhaps, I may tell you a little more.

THE END.

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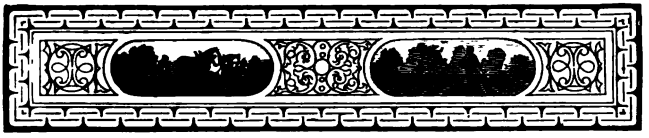

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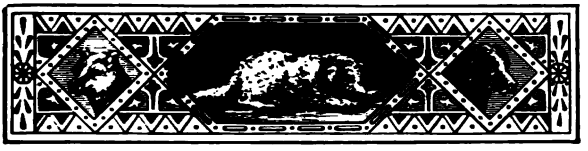

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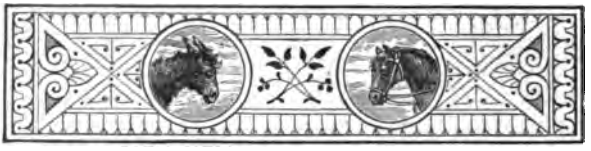

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